

**'THE GOVERNMENT OF CHRIST': JOHN WOOLMAN'S (1720-1772)
APOCALYPTIC THEOLOGY**

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ABSTRACT

Previous approaches to colonial New Jersey Quaker tailor, John Woolman (1720-1772), have failed to address the centrality of theology to his social reforms. This thesis comprises an original contribution to Woolman studies and 18th century Quaker theology through a demonstration of a heretofore unrecognised apocalyptic theology which encompassed a practical and comprehensive vision of God's kingdom on earth. Based on an analysis of Woolman's entire body of writing, this thesis argues that Woolman's theology is best understood as apocalyptic because it was centred on a vision of Christ's immediate presence governing all aspects of human affairs. Woolman's apocalypticism is analysed around three main theological themes: divine revelation, propheticism and eschatology. These themes are evident in Woolman's belief that, 1) God intervened in world affairs to reveal God's will for humanity on earth in a way unavailable to the senses and natural faculties; 2) God's will made claims on society and God commissioned human agents to confront apostasy and be God's spokespeople; and, 3) the faithful embodied the kingdom and pointed to the transformation of all things to establish the 'government of Christ'.

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CHAPTER ONE

'THE GOVERNMENT OF CHRIST': JOHN WOOLMAN'S (1720-1772) APOCALYPTIC THEOLOGY

Based on an analysis of Woolman's entire body of writing, this thesis explores John Woolman's (1720-1772) theology and argues that it is best understood as apocalyptic.¹ His theology is apocalyptic in that it is centred on a supernatural revelation of Christ's immediate presence governing all aspects of human affairs, envisaging the impending victory of God's reign over apostasy. Woolman's apocalypticism is explored around three main theological themes: divine revelation, propheticism and eschatology. These themes are illuminated through Woolman's belief that, 1) God intervened in world affairs to reveal God's will for humanity on earth in a way unavailable to the senses and natural faculties; 2) God's will made claims on society and God commissioned human agents to confront apostasy and be God's spokespeople; and, 3) the faithful embodied the kingdom and pointed the world to the transformation of all things in accordance with divine intentions. Recent scholarship has approached John Woolman from biographical, historical, literary and devotional disciplines,² this thesis augments that scholarship by presenting a rigorous analysis of the theological foundations of

¹ As John Bright notes, 'apocalypse means "revelation". Specifically, it is a revelation couched in cryptic language of the great end of events. It tells how God will intervene to wind up the affairs of this earth, to judge his foes and to set up his Kingdom.' John Bright, *The Kingdom of God, the Biblical Concept and Its Meaning for the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1953), 163; cf. 1.4.

² Michael Heller, ed., *The Tendering Presence: Essays on John Woolman* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 2003); Michael L. Birkel, *A Near Sympathy: The Timeless Quaker Wisdom of John Woolman* (Friends United Press, 2003); Thomas Slaughter, *The Beautiful Soul of John Woolman, Apostle of Abolition*, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008); David Sox, *John Woolman: Quintessential Quaker, 1720-1772* (York: Sessions Bk. Trust, 1999); Geoffrey Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom: A Quaker in the British Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

Woolman's thought.

The Quaker culture of 18th century colonial America is understudied and diverse.³ The inter-related facets of Woolman's theology, his cultural and spiritual influences, heritage and religious situation as a Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (PYM) Quaker in the mid-18th century, pose challenges in presenting Woolman's thought systematically. Woolman is a complex character for theological study because of his integration of action and Spirit, mysticism and the prophetic, social justice and personal piety, which he blended together in ways that contradicted the norms of his community and, thus, defy researchers' categories. Each of these elements was fundamental to the way in which Woolman lived out his faith in the world in a theologically integrated way and are indicated in a term used throughout this thesis: 'theologico-social'. This term denotes the inward/outward, social/mystical fusion of God's governance over all things at the core of Woolman's apocalypticism and vision for the world.

Section 1.1 of this chapter introduces 17th century Quaker origins and reviews scholarship on early-Quakers. In section 1.2.1, I describe the context out of which Woolman's theology arose through a history of Penn's 'Holy Experiment' and the political and social tensions which developed among Quakers who tried to strike a balance between Quaker ethics and the protection of political supremacy and personal wealth. These tensions led to the formation of a new leadership in PYM as a group of reform-minded Quakers sought to invigorate Quakerism.⁴ This aspect is described in 1.2.2. In 1.2.3, the controversies and issues surrounding the Quaker reaction to the

³ Pink Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity and Engagement with "the World": the Separate Spheres of Quaker Quietism', *Common Knowledge* 16, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 96; Jean R. Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery: A Divided Spirit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 14.

⁴ In 5.2, I compare Woolman to other reform-minded Quakers of his generation and demonstrate that while there were similarities among them they were, nonetheless, a theologically diverse group.

Seven Years' War are identified. In 1.2.4, I describe outside cultural trends, such as the transatlantic economy, the Great Awakening, the Enlightenment and Quietism, which had varying degrees of influence on PYM in the 18th century. A biographical sketch of John Woolman's life, primarily taken from his own account in his *Journal*, follows in 1.3. In 1.4, I explore what constitutes apocalyptic and propose a definition of an apocalyptic theology. The purpose of section 1.5 is to show the sources used in describing Woolman's theology as well as the veracity of those sources and the methodology through which they are applied. A review of recent literature on Woolman comprises section 1.6. The need for the present theological research as an essential way to understand Woolman is presented in 1.7 and is followed by a thesis outline in 1.8.

1.1 17th Century Quaker Origins

Quakers began as a movement in 1652 when George Fox preached to a gathering of separatist congregations on Firbank Fell.⁵ By the second half of 1652, a leadership group of James Nayler, Thomas Aldam, Richard Farnworth and William Dewsbury gave shape to the young movement, though Fox was most influential.⁶ The movement spread rapidly in the north of England, based at Swarthmoor Hall near Ulverston.⁷ Swarthmoor was the home of Margaret Fell and her husband Thomas, a wealthy judge, who provided political support and a central location to establish the movement.⁸ During 1654, the Quakers spread south despite the imprisonment of many

⁵ Rosemary Moore, *The Light in Their Consciences: Early Quakers in Britain, 1646-1666* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 14-15.

⁶ Moore, *Light in Their Consciences*, 19, 30-31.

⁷ Moore, *Light in Their Consciences*, 14.

⁸ Moore, *Light in Their Consciences*, 14-15.

ministers.⁹ Early Quakers challenged England's religious establishment, refused to pay tithes to support a professional ministry and interrupted worship services, which attracted many who were frustrated with the parish system.¹⁰ Within the first decade, the Quaker movement grew to between thirty thousand and sixty thousand in a country with a total population of five million.¹¹

1.1.1 George Fox (1624-1691) and the Apocalypse in 17th Century Quakerism

This section examines early Quaker thought, using Fox as an example. Douglas Gwyn has argued that Fox's spirituality is best understood in terms of apocalyptic experience.¹² Gwyn's interpretation makes sense of the revolutionary energy and language of Fox and early Friends.¹³ Gwyn notes that Fox's common phrase, 'Christ has come to teach his people himself', was essentially apocalyptic because it asserted the fulfillment of eschatological expectations through an indwelling of God's Word that superseded all other forms of authority.¹⁴ Gwyn's theological lens guides my discussion of early Quaker theology.

In the mid-20th century, historians Geoffrey Nuttall and Hugh Barbour argued that the Quaker movement was a natural development of Puritanism.¹⁵ Gwyn takes this

⁹ Moore, *Light in Their Consciences*, 23, 25.

¹⁰ Moore, *Light in Their Consciences*, 34.

¹¹ Moore, *Light in Their Consciences*, 34.

¹² Douglas Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word: the Life and Message of George Fox (1624-1691)* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1986), 64.

¹³ Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word*, 64. In this thesis, I use the terms 'Quakers' and 'Friends' interchangeably.

¹⁴ Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word*, 30-31.

¹⁵ Barbour says that the conflicts between Quakers and Puritans 'had the loving desperation of a family feud.' He argues that Quakers inherited from their Puritan context an idealisation of social protest and suffering, a desire to remake society under God's direction, a distrust of religious hierarchy and a desire to purify and simplify national life. Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 14; Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan*

analysis further by noting how theological expectations among disillusioned Puritans provided the spiritual context for the Quaker message.¹⁶ The central point around which early Quakers were gathered was that Christ was revealed to them in an ongoing way and called them to prophetic witness on behalf of God's kingdom come.¹⁷ Gwyn compares the tension between the Quakers and Puritans to 'the painful birth pangs of a vigorous new religious movement emerging from the midst of a great old one.'¹⁸ The Quakers believed they were the fulfillment of the Puritan message, but were rejected as such and so took on a life of their own, 'but not without some parting shots.'¹⁹

Gwyn claims Fox experienced his conversion, in 1647, as an apocalyptic fulfillment.²⁰

The etymology of 'apocalypse' defines the word in terms of revelation.²¹ Gwyn argues that Fox's conversion and subsequent revelation of God's presence and teaching display the characteristics of apocalyptic thought: God's ultimate judgment over sin; warfare between the forces of good and

¹⁶ *England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 2-10.

¹⁷ Gwyn notes that there were two types of Puritan Seekers. 'Type A' were the classic seekers, 'young hyper-Puritans, driven to near-despair by their sinfulness and the absence of a "true" Church.' 'Seeker B' types, though, 'were less mournful, more confident that they were the vanguard of a new age of the Spirit that would soon overwhelm the rest of England.' Seeker B types were not looking for a return to primitive Christianity when those ways of being Church had so quickly fallen into apostasy. Instead, they felt that God was taking them forward to a new dispensation. Fox was able to unite these two groups and, with the help of other early leaders, provided a spiritual home for them. Douglas Gwyn, 'Apocalypse Now and Then: Reading Early Friends in the Belly of the Beast', in *The Creation of Quaker Theory: Insider Perspectives*, ed. Pink Dandelion (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2004), 142-143; Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word*, xix.

¹⁸ Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word*, 213.

¹⁹ Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word*, 44.

²⁰ Fox described his conversion in his journal:

But as I had forsaken all the priests, so I left the separate preachers also, and those called the most experienced people; for I saw there was none among them all that could speak to my condition. And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could tell what to do, then, Oh then, I heard a voice which said, "There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition", and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy...And this I knew experimentally.

Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word*, 64; George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, ed. John L. Nickalls (London: Religious Society of Friends, 1975), 11.

²¹ Douglas Gwyn, 'Come Again?' in, *Heaven on Earth: Quakers and the Second Coming* (Birmingham: Curlew Productions; Woodbrooke College, 1998), 8; cf. 1.4.

evil; the overthrowing of depraved structures and new beginning; fulfillment toward a perfected primitive ideal and creation-wide redemption.²²

In the context of 17th century early Quaker development, Gwyn argues, this apocalyptic theology entailed the expectation that the world was being transformed.²³ The early Quakers were not content with ideas of renewal or reform, but used the much more radical language of all things being overturned in the power of Christ's direct teaching.²⁴ In section 5.1, this thesis examines the extent that Woolman was influenced by the early Quakers, and argues that Woolman's theology of divine immanence and spiritual eschatology resonated with the theology of early Quakers.²⁵

1.2.1 The 'Holy Experiment': Quakers and Power

In 1682, the first Quaker settlers arrived in the new colony of Pennsylvania.²⁶ Four years earlier John Woolman's grandfather – also named John Woolman – arrived in neighbouring West Jersey along with a strong Quaker community.²⁷ Penn's vision for Pennsylvania was grand: religious liberty was granted on the basis of theological conviction, not mere expediency.²⁸ Pennsylvania was to be a realm where the sacred and the secular were united under God's governance, where God's kingdom would be

²² Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word*, 64.

²³ Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word*, 175.

²⁴ Fox never let this apocalyptic sensibility go and carried the ideal of the transformation and redemption of all things until his death in 1691. Douglas Gwyn, 'From Covenant to Contract: the Quaker counter-restoration', in *Heaven on Earth: Quakers and the Second Coming* (Birmingham: Curlew Productions; Woodbrooke College, 1998), 132; Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word*, 175.

²⁵ See 5.1.

²⁶ Frederick Barnes Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: the Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia, 1682-1763* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), 97.

²⁷ James Proud, 'A Note on John Woolman's Paternal Ancestors: The Gloucestershire Roots; The West New Jersey Plantation', *Quaker History* 96, no. 2 (2007): 38–39; Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 11.

²⁸ Patricia Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society and Politics in Colonial America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 36; Philip Boroughs, 'John Woolman (1720-1772): Spirituality and Social Transformation in Colonial America' (Ph.D. Dissertation, Graduate Theological Union Berkeley, CA, 1989), 24–25.

enacted in the human spheres of government and law.²⁹ Here, political means were to advance God's ends.³⁰

However, Frederick Tolles argued that, by 1756, the 'Holy Experiment', as it had originally been conceived, was dead and a new vision was taking its place.³¹ As a whole, power, influence and wealth were procured in the colonies as succeeding generations enjoyed the advantages of a close relationship to the religion and ethnicity of the founding generation.³² This connection and the ensuing 'preemptive economic advantages', as Patricia Bonomi argues, meant that those seeking wealth, influence, increased clientèle or proximity to power were often drawn towards the worship centres of a region's founding religious group.³³

According to Tolles, Pennsylvania's geographical location, as an important venue for the unfolding of French-English tensions, finally led to a political impasse and the withdrawal of some Quaker politicians from the Quaker dominated Assembly.³⁴ The marriage between a political methodology and spiritual idealism put Pennsylvania Quakers in a precarious and vulnerable position in the colony's leadership.³⁵ On one side was Penn's understanding of politics as 'a part of religion itself',³⁶ while on the other was the criticism by outsiders that Quakers used religious gatherings as opportunities to solidify the political base and advance political interests.³⁷ The tensions between 1)

²⁹ Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*, 10.

³⁰ Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*, 10.

³¹ Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*, 234-235.

³² Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 96.

³³ Indeed, one colonial Pennsylvanian Anglican minister bemoaned this trend when his congregation declined in membership as parishioners were 'awed by the Quaker party... [and] will truckle to power, who otherwise would be faithful Church men.' Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 96.

³⁴ Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*, 11.

³⁵ Jack D. Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), xiii.

³⁶ William Penn, quoted in: Marietta, *The Reformation of American Quakerism*, 10.

³⁷ Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 169.

Quaker politicians and their faith; 2) Quakers and the religious diversity enabled by Penn's founding vision; and 3) Quakers and the actions of the colony that they, at least ostensibly, controlled, would prove to shake American Quakers to their core and usher in a period of lament and reform.³⁸

While the Pennsylvania government was generally associated with Quakers, the situation was more complicated than that.³⁹ The Pennsylvania government was divided between an executive branch, controlled by Proprietary appointments, and the Whiggish Assembly, controlled by a Quaker dominated coalition. The executive branch was often antagonistic to Quaker goals.⁴⁰ However, it *is* fair to say that the Quaker dominated Assembly shaped Pennsylvania law to reflect Quaker values.⁴¹ Even so, the political struggle between the Assembly and the Proprietary executives led to some of the chief compromises to which Quaker reformers objected.⁴²

1.2.2 The 'Quaker Reformation'

Jack Marietta suggests that the original Quaker testimonies and theological imperatives did not flow seamlessly from the 17th century into the 18th century.⁴³ An era of Quaker complacency separated seventeenth-century Quaker leaders from the eighteenth-century reformers and severed the later Friends from the reformist impulse that had existed in the earlier age.⁴⁴ However, Jane Calvert has recently demonstrated that it was not that simple; there were many different ways to be a Quaker in good

³⁸ Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, 7, 8, 167; Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 64, 242.

³⁹ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 155.

⁴⁰ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 132.

⁴¹ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 132, 184.

⁴² Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 184.

⁴³ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 97-98.

⁴⁴ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 97.

standing in 18th century PYM.⁴⁵ Both the Quaker reformers and Quaker politicians and merchants, she asserts, were within the spectrum of accepted behaviour.⁴⁶

However, according to the reformers, the ethical lapses of the Quaker political party – such as violating their interpretation of the peace testimony⁴⁷ – were symptomatic of a more fundamental transformation in the Quaker vision for Pennsylvania, the separation of Quaker faith into spheres.⁴⁸ The Quaker reformers wished to correct the separation of life into distinct arenas and the exclusion of Quaker ethics from some of them, such as politics and business.⁴⁹

Marietta argues that 'the Quaker reformation⁵⁰ was not the work of any one person and no actor in it was irreplaceable.'⁵¹ The reforms that occurred in the PYM were only possible because of a group of like-minded ministers.⁵² Geoffrey Plank considers these reformers atypical 'Quakers for their era, [who] managed to affect change with their religious society by mobilizing a variety of persuasive techniques.'⁵³

The reformers held three theological convictions in common, which motivated their efforts.⁵⁴ Firstly, the reformers shared a primitivism which informed their concept

⁴⁵ Jane Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism and the Political Thought of John Dickinson* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 177.

⁴⁶ Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism*, 177.

⁴⁷ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 184.

⁴⁸ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, xii.

⁴⁹ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, xii.

⁵⁰ David Sox contends that Marietta's language of a 'Quaker reformation' is too strong. Rather, Sox frames the movement as that of a number of Quaker ministers who shared a common desire for the advancement of social and economic justice in the PYM. I suggest that 'reformation' is an appropriate term because it was a re-forming of the corporate values of the PYM in its most basic sense. Sox, *John Woolman*, 44.

⁵¹ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 32.

⁵² Geoffrey Plank, 'Sailing with John Woolman: The Millennium and Maritime Trade', *Early American Studies* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 48.

⁵³ Plank, 'Sailing with John Woolman', 48.

⁵⁴ Future research could perform the type of micro-theological research on other 18th century PYM reformers this thesis does with John Woolman. See 5.2 for a theological analysis of leading Quaker reformers.

of a utopian future.⁵⁵ A century before, the reformers believed a righteous community had existed and could exist again.⁵⁶ This primitivism motivated the men and women reformers of the 18th century to toil with increased vigour for the vision they wished to re-establish.⁵⁷ Secondly, the theological doctrine of perfection found in the writings of early Friends continued into the 18th century, albeit in a different context.⁵⁸ The broad scope of the reforms, and, indeed, the detail and meticulousness with which the reforms were applied, as well as their rhetoric, are evidence that reforming Friends intended to bring all aspects of life under the oversight of their interpretation of the Gospel.⁵⁹ Finally, 18th century Quaker reformers were engaged in an eschatological act through the re-forming of the physical presence of Christ in the Quaker community.⁶⁰ As Christ's presence was embodied in the community and corporate testimony of the Friends, they believed, so Christ's redemption was manifested.⁶¹

1.2.3 The Seven Years' War and the Crisis of 1756

⁵⁵ A 1755 amendment to the PYM discipline cited the past as a template for the present: 'elders, overseers, and all others active in the discipline [are] to be zealously concerned for the cause of Truth and honestly to labour to repair the breaches too obvious in many places that there may be some well grounded hopes that the *primitive beauty and purity* of the Church may be restored.' Anonymous, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting minutes, 20-9 month-1755, quoted in Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 54. Italics mine. See also, Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 93.

⁵⁶ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 93.

⁵⁷ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 93.

⁵⁸ See, especially: Carole Dale Spencer, *Holiness – the Soul of Quakerism: an Historical Analysis of the Theology of Holiness in the Quaker Tradition* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), 120.

⁵⁹ For example, around 1752 Anthony Benezet (1713-1784), a leader among the PYM reformers, wrote an encouraging letter to a schoolmaster named William:

...Let it be thy chiefest concern to seek and serve God. His care and love is extended to thee, and he is nearer to thee than any thing thou can conceive. The only end for which thou wast created in this world is, that by living in a state of obedience, by constant watching & prayer, thy soul may, with the assistance of divine grace, become so purified, as to be fitted to dwell with God for ever.

George Brookes, *Friend Anthony Benezet* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1937), 210. See also, Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 72.

⁶⁰ See, Kathryn Damiano, 'On Earth as it is in Heaven: Eighteenth Century Quakerism as Realized Eschatology' (Ph. D. Dissertation, Union of Experimenting Colleges and Universities, 1988), 167.

⁶¹ Damiano, 'On Earth as it is in Heaven', 167.

As political tensions mounted between France and Britain and Pennsylvania found itself a central theatre for the development of those tensions,⁶² reform-minded Quakers became increasingly uneasy with what they considered to be the Quaker-led Assembly's acquiescence to the compromises of politics.⁶³ Ministers felt their concerns for the compromising impact of public office-holding confirmed, beginning in 1754, when the Assembly began to prepare for war.⁶⁴ The reformers challenged what had become, by the 1750s, the Quaker position on war: a refusal to participate in combat, but a short-term understanding of the inevitability of war, including paying taxes for combat purposes.⁶⁵

In 1755, under pressure from the pro-war Proprietary Party,⁶⁶ the Quaker dominated Pennsylvania Assembly chartered a volunteer militia.⁶⁷ The following year, 1756, was the crisis year for colonial Quakers, a turning point due to which many

⁶² In 1747, English land speculators formed the Ohio Company and began to send expeditions into the territory. These endeavours clashed with the goals of the French who were consolidating their influence in the Ohio River Valley by erecting a series of forts in the region. Meanwhile, the Native American population claimed the region belonged to them. With the eventual alliance between the Native Americans and the French and the continuing westward expansion on the Pennsylvania frontier, the stage was set for open hostilities. Kevin Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn's Holy Experiment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 51-52.

⁶³ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 155.

⁶⁴ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 122.

⁶⁵ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 178.

⁶⁶ By the mid-18th century, the Proprietary Party consisted not only of the colonial proprietors like Thomas Penn, but Anglicans and Presbyterians more generally, all of whom were united against the Quaker dominated Assembly. Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost*, 7, 40; Richard Bauman, *For the Reputation of Truth: Politics, Religion, and Conflict Among the Pennsylvania Quakers, 1750-1800* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), 7-8.

⁶⁷ Fearing political reprisals, the Quaker Party created a volunteer militia to defend the frontier and fight Native Americans, paid for out of tax coffers. The creation of a militia had been called for by the Proprietary Party as early as 1747, but was previously rejected by the Assembly over issues of funding and control. The creation of the militia in 1755 – when it appeared Quaker dominance in the Assembly would be tested because of their refusal to prepare for war – appeared, to many non-Quakers, to demonstrate Quaker hypocrisy and political opportunism. It also demonstrated to anti-war Quakers the compromises Quaker politicians would make to preserve their power. Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 155; Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost*, 76-77, 79; cf. 1.2.1.

reforms were enacted.⁶⁸ The impetus for this change was the declaration of war on the Delaware Indians by the Pennsylvania government – issuing bounties on the scalps of both men and women Delawares – which, in turn, forced the resignation of many conscientious Quakers from political office.⁶⁹ Tolles maintains that some Quakers felt they had to withdraw from the ranks of the Pennsylvania power-brokers, in 1756, in order to 'preserve any shadow of consistency'.⁷⁰

The Seven Years' War⁷¹ left an impression on the theological understanding of PYM Quakers and became part of their understanding of God's activity in the world.⁷² For example, at the 1758 PYM sessions, Quaker leaders openly talked of the Seven Years' War as a possible divine consequence for moral declension, specifically, keeping slaves.⁷³ The reformers were not content to follow the letter of the law rather they actively identified new implications for the Quaker peace testimony.⁷⁴

The Quaker withdrawal from political office was but one example of the mid-18th century reformation. The reformers paid just as much attention to small infractions as to the much larger sins.⁷⁵ This moral rigour among the PYM reformers coincided with increased laxity in society as a whole.⁷⁶ Marietta argues that Woolman's antislavery efforts in this period have 'obscured' the attention reformers paid to simpler sins

⁶⁸ Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*, 235.

⁶⁹ Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*, 235.

⁷⁰ Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House*, 27.

⁷¹ The Seven Years' War (1756-1763) refers to imperial conflicts between France and Britain. The common name for the conflicts in the North American theatre of the Seven Years' War is the French and Indian War, which began a couple years prior (1754) to the official start of the Seven Years' War. This thesis uses the name 'Seven Years' War', except when referring to the North American conflicts which occurred before the official declaration of war between France and Britain.

⁷² Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, 30.

⁷³ Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, 30.

⁷⁴ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 173.

⁷⁵ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 82.

⁷⁶ Gay Pilgrim, 'Taming Anarchy: Quaker Alternate Ordering and "Otherness"', in *The Creation of Quaker Theory: Insider Perspectives*, ed. Pink. Dandelion (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 214.

throughout the PYM.⁷⁷ For example, in 1761, an infraction, such as fornication, was called 'heinous', 'gross', 'scandalous' and 'detestable'.⁷⁸ Marietta asks, 'what was slaveholding...if fornication was "heinous?"'⁷⁹ However, 18th century Quakers balanced their desire for internal purity with outward-focused social justice, such as efforts for reconciliation with Native Americans,⁸⁰ peace-building and antislavery.⁸¹

Rufus Jones and Pink Dandelion argue that the scrupulosity of the reform movement was part of Quaker Quietism's inward-focused cloistering of Friends from 'the world'.⁸² While the rigorous discipline invoked during the PYM reformation did have an introspective purpose, this introspective purpose was part of a larger vision for Quaker witness which included reaching out to society.⁸³ William Taber notes that one primary calling of Quaker ministers during the 18th century was that of the maintenance of Quaker spiritual practice, not just evangelism.⁸⁴ However, the introspective analysis of the integrity of the Quaker witness did not abandon an evangelistic approach, which is evidenced by the Meetings for Worship held for non-Quakers and the numbers of

⁷⁷ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism, 1748-1783*, 82.

⁷⁸ Western Quarterly Meeting Minutes, 16-11 month-1761, quoted in Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 82.

⁷⁹ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 82.

⁸⁰ Cedric Cowing suggests that the basis for Penn's and later Quakers' dealings with Native Americans was a strong paternalism. Likewise, Kenny notes that for all of Penn's good intentions, the founding of Pennsylvania was established on 'colonialist foundations' for which Native American compliance was a necessary part. Cedric Cowing, *The Great Awakening and the American Revolution: Colonial Thought in the 18th Century* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1972), 81; Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost*, 2

⁸¹ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 82.

⁸² See 1.2.4 d); Pink Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity', 99-100; Rufus Matthew Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1921), 74-75. 'The world' was a biblical concept considered synonymous with a fallen and disobedient state opposed to God's purposes. Jesus said: 'These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world' (John 16:33, King James Version [KJV], all future biblical quotations are from the KJV).

⁸³ William Taber, 'The Theology of the Inward Imperative: Traveling Quaker Ministry of the Middle Period', *Quaker Religious Thought* 18, no. 4 (Autumn 1980): 17.

⁸⁴ Taber, 'The Theology of the Inward Imperative', 17.

non-Quakers who came to hear traveling Quaker ministers at Quaker gatherings.⁸⁵ Moreover, the record of social action, such as antislavery, which grew out of the Quaker reformation, demonstrates an outward and an inward movement.⁸⁶ Marietta contends that the discipline, which developed during the mid-18th century,⁸⁷ served the purpose of preserving corporate witness:⁸⁸ '...it became the Society's duty to make honesty a fact; to cull from their ranks the dishonest and untrustworthy.'⁸⁹ PYM Quakers, even in their refusal to participate in the Seven Years' War, for example, understood their actions as political statements with a proselytising purpose.⁹⁰ In other words, reformers desired to restore integrity to the Friends in order to publicly advance the reputation of Truth.

One of the most important methods employed by reform-minded ministers to keep the reformation on track and uphold PYM discipline was the practice of sending traveling ministers around PYM to encourage reform-minded Friends, often in Meetings dominated by apathetic and compromising members, to continue in the work of the movement.⁹¹ Part of the task of traveling ministers, of which Woolman was but one, was to speak truth within Quaker circles, though not exclusively,⁹² as Christ's instruments for the governing of his living body.⁹³ These ministers maintained the discipline and thrust of the reformation by discerning and addressing sins within a meeting.⁹⁴

In the next section, I describe important 18th century cultural forces: the rise of

⁸⁵ Taber, 'The Theology of the Inward Imperative', 17.

⁸⁶ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 82.

⁸⁷ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 31.

⁸⁸ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 3.

⁸⁹ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 3.

⁹⁰ Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism*, 9.

⁹¹ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 76.

⁹² Taber, 'Theology of the Inward Imperative', 17.

⁹³ Taber, 'Theology of the Inward Imperative', 14.

⁹⁴ Taber, 'Theology of the Inward Imperative', 14.

the transatlantic marketplace, the Great Awakening, the Enlightenment and Quietism.

1.2.4 Cultural Forces in Colonial America

a) The Transatlantic Marketplace

Recently, economic historians have identified the culturally homogenising influence of commercial and consumer interests in British colonial North America and the economic transition that occurred during the 18th century.⁹⁵ This is important for a study of Woolman's apocalyptic theology because his theologically-social vision of God's governance confronted the foundation of imperial economics.⁹⁶ According to his vision, 'Fewer People would be employed in Vanities and Superfluities...', such as shipping luxury goods back and forth across the Atlantic, and 'More People would be employed in the sweet Employment of Husbandry'.⁹⁷ Woolman's vision of pastoral, subsistence farming was threatened by the transatlantic economy he so often criticised. Jon Butler notes that, while farming remained 'largely "subsistence" in character', in the 18th century, 'farming also became increasingly commercial after 1680, and farmers everywhere paid considerably more attention to "markets" than they had ever done before.'⁹⁸ By the 1760s, Butler contends, farmers were quite 'commercially oriented' even as subsistence farming continued.⁹⁹

As I demonstrate in 4.1, Woolman identified the fulfillment of God's

⁹⁵ T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman and Peter Albert, eds., *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994); Jon Butler, *Becoming America: The Revolution before 1776* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

⁹⁶ See, for example, his concerns about ocean going traffic in 3.2.1 and 4.1.

⁹⁷ See discussion in 2.2.2

⁹⁸ Butler, *Becoming America*, 51.

⁹⁹ Butler, *Becoming America*, 51.

eschatological purposes with Isaiah's vision of the peaceable kingdom and, thus, rejected what he perceived to be the cultural and economic shift away from farming and towards what T.H. Breen calls 'a new consumer society'.¹⁰⁰ The following paragraphs describe the economic changes that occurred during the 18th century.

Breen argues that, by the middle of the 18th century, a 'transformation of the Anglo-American consumer marketplace' had occurred.¹⁰¹ The dramatic increase in British manufactured imports available even to families of modest wealth increased throughout the 18th century.¹⁰² While the North American colonists were in many ways

¹⁰⁰ Woolman was not the only colonist to warn of a dependency on consumer goods. However, while he was concerned about the spiritually alienating effects of luxury, others were concerned with the way colonial consumer habits had created a dependency on Britain, which, they felt, Britain was exploiting. For example, the anonymous author of the 1768 pamphlet *The Power and Grandeur of Great-Britain*, noted that, as the colony's population increased, 'the British trade keeps pace'. The author described how Britain had benefited financially from the colonies and how colonists had contributed to their own dependency on Britain by purchasing 'merchandise of an almost infinite variety, numberless useful and useless articles...Very considerable cities subsist merely by the sale of British manufactures.' Moreover, while the author intended this article to demonstrate Britain's exploitative commercial practices and her indebtedness to the colonies, the author also identified – probably with a degree of rhetorical vitriol – the way commercial interests had come to dominate colonial society:

The seas and the wilds of America are ransack'd to make payment of them, and the improved lands are cultivated chiefly for the same purpose. These are the labours of the British colonies, for the mother country in times of peace... Britain in the two last wars, saw her's [exports] increased, and her revenue arising from imports and duties, greatly augmented. For this advantage she is also indebted to her colonies. Immense was the sale of British manufactures, during [the] last war.

Material objects, even 'useless articles', increasingly took on social and political meaning beyond their mere practical value. Benjamin Franklin, also warned of the consumption of, and dependency on, British luxury items, but for a different reason. Rather than promoting a less materialistic society, Franklin's appeal was intended to promote economic protest which would, ultimately, sustain and protect colonial consumer habits threatened by British taxation. Thus, Franklin's intention was to preserve the consumer choice, which had developed in the colonies, and he viewed British exploitation as a threat to that endeavour. Even among the Quaker reformers, not everyone had the same qualms about selling imported luxury goods as did Woolman. Breen demonstrates the variety of goods available to consumers and the excitement generated by such goods by describing a 1752 advertisement by Mordecai Yarnall which consisted of a long item by item list of over 50 newly imported goods, including luxury items like 'silks and calicoes' and silver watches. Yarnall was a Quaker and co-signer on several PYM reformist epistles. This would indicate that Woolman and Yarnall had differing opinions on the importation of luxury goods.

Anon., *The Power and Grandeur of Great-Britain, Founded on the Liberty of the Colonies, and the Mischiefs Attending the Taxing Them by Act of Parliament Demonstrated* (New York: Printed and sold by James Parker, at the new printing-office, in Beaver-Street), 5; Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, 12, 37, 53-54; John Woolman, 'Journal', in *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Phillips P. Moulton (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1971), 50 fn. 86, 101. See 2.2 and 5.2.

¹⁰¹ Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, xv; see also, Butler, *Becoming America*, 5-6.

¹⁰² Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, xv.

different, the same range of imported consumer goods was available throughout the colonies.¹⁰³ Thus, Breen contends that the desire for consumer choice united colonists who felt dependent on Britain and the British commercial network for their freedom of consumption.¹⁰⁴ Material objects were politically charged as colonists became accustomed to the consumer choice provided by increased imports and the availability of liberal credit, and used those choices to articulate social status.¹⁰⁵ Thus, material goods took on new meaning in the 18th century and provided new ways to stratify society. Cary Carson sees a rise in image-conscious consumer choices after the middle of the 18th century, as colonists began to demand more goods especially goods that helped clarify social order with 'fashionableness'.¹⁰⁶ By mid-century, colonial households were spending more on tableware than on pots and pans.¹⁰⁷ As the 18th century advanced, there was a proliferation of goods in those product lines instrumental to the performance of status-conscious social activities.¹⁰⁸

In the second half of the 18th century, newly imported luxury goods were made

¹⁰³ Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, xv.

¹⁰⁴ Thus, Breen argues that the events leading up to the Revolution in Boston and the affirmative responses by colonists in other parts of the New World, suggest that the Revolution was not organised politically around ideological concerns, but around a shared consumerist and economic identity. Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, xv, 2.

¹⁰⁵ Breen writes:

After the 1740s [colonists] began articulating status and beauty through choice; it affected the character of relations within family and community. Even more, it introduced dynamic categories of comfort and taste into the lives of middling sorts of people, forcing them to recalculate the allocation of hard-earned family resources. In this social environment, the invitation to make choices from among competing brands, colors, and textures - decisions of great significance to the individual - held within itself the potential for a new kind of collective politics.

Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, xv, xvii.

¹⁰⁶ Cary Carson, 'The Consumer Revolution in Colonial British America: Why Demand?' in, *Of Consuming Interest: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman and Peter Albert (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 505–506.

¹⁰⁷ Carson, 'Consumer Revolution in Colonial British America', 505-506.

¹⁰⁸ Likewise, Breen contends that part of the increase in luxury goods was motivated by 'status competition' as colonists sought to define themselves through consumer choice. Carson, 'Consumer Revolution in Colonial British America', 505-506; Breen, *Marketplace of Revolution*, 14.

available in the colonies.¹⁰⁹ The accumulation of these goods – such as fine rugs, carriages and mahogany furniture – afforded the colonial elite a means of distinguishing themselves from their fellow colonists.¹¹⁰ Moreover, from mid-century on, houses increased in size and cost, as wealthy colonists sought more expensive designs and detail which occasioned greater labour on interior woodwork and decorative plaster.¹¹¹ Throughout the colonial urban centres, 'after 1760', Kevin Sweeney contends, 'spending on houses reached levels never witnessed before'.¹¹²

Yet, even as the number of luxury items increased the ability for a wider range of colonists to participate in the burgeoning transatlantic marketplace, economic prosperity became more and more unequal.¹¹³ Billy Smith argues that success, in the late 18th century, was unequally distributed 'as the richest citizens accrued control of more of the wealth' and the social gulf between the classes grew.¹¹⁴ Smith demonstrates, through an examination of costs and incomes notated in public records, that 'unskilled workers and their families in Philadelphia generally lived on the edge of, or occasionally slightly

¹⁰⁹ The classified advertisement section of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* confirms the vast array of goods 'Imported...from London' in the mid-18th century including 'Bed blankets, blue duffels, stripped duffels, quilts, rugs, blue Welch cottons...silk and mohair, silk handkerchiefs, garlix, ribbons, necklaces, mens and womens velvet caps...stockings of all sorts...' Classified Ads., *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), Thursday, September 20, 1750; Issue 1136. See also, Kevin Sweeney, 'High-Style Vernacular: Lifestyles of the Colonial Elite', in *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman and Peter Albert (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 37.

¹¹⁰ Kevin Sweeney argues that these new luxury goods played a social role:

These expensive consumer goods, which usually were taxed as luxuries throughout the colonies, expressed the genteel ideal of graceful, effortless movement through the landscape. Ideally, it would be movement from a town house to a country seat or from one country seat to another... Carriages thus played an important role in the circulation of gentry families that was necessary to maintain family ties and forge new ones through suitable marriages.

Sweeney, 'High-Style Vernacular', 37-38.

¹¹¹ Sweeney, 'High-Style Vernacular', 38.

¹¹² Sweeney, 'High-Style Vernacular', 38.

¹¹³ Billy Smith, *The 'Lower Sort': Philadelphia's Laboring People, 1750-1800* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 38-39.

¹¹⁴ Smith, *Lower Sort*, 38-39.

above, the subsistence level...Consequently, institutional aid to the poor rose to unprecedented heights during the second half of the [18th] century.¹¹⁵

Thus, as imported luxury items increased and more and more social weight was placed on those goods, many found themselves lacking the necessities for adequate living.¹¹⁶ Woolman connected 'superfluous' luxury items with a desire for social status and 'outward greatness'.¹¹⁷ It was his conviction that, if colonists rejected these consumer interests, society could be rightly ordered in a way that all people could find rewarding work without excess worry.¹¹⁸ As colonists rejected the divinely ordered and guided society, Woolman thought both the wealthy and the poor were alienated from God's government.¹¹⁹ He acknowledged that colonists paid higher interest rates than were paid in England, but, instead of laying the blame for this on British taxation or monetary policy, he questioned the nature of an economic system where resources flowed from the colonies to England where they were then turned into luxury goods and shipped back to colonial markets at a markup.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Smith, *Lower Sort*, 112.

¹¹⁶ Woolman addressed this conundrum in the mid-1760s as he composed *A Plea for the Poor*:

Were all superfluities and the desire of outward greatness laid aside and the right use of things universally attended to, such a number of people might be employed in things useful that moderate labour with the blessing of heaven would answer all good purposes relating to people and their animals, and a sufficient number have leisure to attend on proper affairs of civil society.

John Woolman, 'A Plea for the Poor, or A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich', in *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Phillips P. Moulton (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1971), 240.

¹¹⁷ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 240.

¹¹⁸ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 240.

¹¹⁹ See also, 3.2.

¹²⁰ John Woolman's brother, Abner, expressed a similar sentiment to his brother's when he said of the trade to the Caribbean:

The produce which we send there is chiefly flour and pork and in raising and gathering of this how often do we see creatures and sometimes men oppressed. The return which we have is chiefly rum, sugar and molasses and it often has been as a query in my mind: Is rum as it is used by us of any real service to the inhabitants of America? How often do we see people deprived of their reason by drinking too freely of it and many have so far given way to it that it has been the cause of their own and their families' poverty and that which is more dreadful it unfits the soul for that glorious kingdom prepared for the

This sub-section has shown that imports and demand for consumer goods increased during the 18th century and that these goods were given political and social weight. Woolman, however, felt that this increased consumer activity hindered God's purposes and led to oppression.¹²¹ He held that God's kingdom created a new reality in which sinful social and economic structures were no longer tenable.¹²² This transatlantic economic context informed Woolman's apocalyptic theology both in terms of the eschatological vision for society he thought God had revealed and in terms of the dire consequences the *status quo* entailed.¹²³

b) The Great Awakening

Bonomi defines the Great Awakening as an 'intense period of revivalist tumult from about 1739-1745'.¹²⁴ Even though the Great Awakening occurred in his lifetime, Woolman demonstrated little awareness of it.¹²⁵ On the other hand, Sydney James and Carole Dale Spencer suggest that the Quaker reformation¹²⁶ and the rise of antislavery efforts among Quakers in the mid-18th century was the Quaker corollary to the Great Awakening.¹²⁷

righteous from the foundation of the world.

This essay was submitted for publication and distribution to the PYM Meeting for Sufferings by John Abner Woolman, 'Abner Woolman's Essay on the West Indies Trade', in *John Woolman and the Affairs of Truth: The Journalist's Essays, Epistles, and Ephemera*, ed. James Proud (San Francisco, CA: Inner Light Books, 2010), 279; cf. John Woolman, 'Conversations on the True Harmony of Mankind and How it may be Promoted', in *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Amelia M. Gummere (New York: Macmillan Company, 1922), 461; John Woolman to Meeting for Sufferings, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, 1772, Quaker Collection, Swarthmore College, Friends Historical Library.

¹²¹ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 240.

¹²² See 4.1.

¹²³ See 4.1 and 4.3.

¹²⁴ Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 131.

¹²⁵ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 11-12.

¹²⁶ See 1.2.2.

¹²⁷ Sydney James, *A People Among Peoples: Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth-Century America*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 137; Spencer, *Holiness*, 93.

PYM Quakers were certainly aware of the Evangelical ferment in their cities.¹²⁸ When George Whitefield visited Philadelphia he became a topic of conversation among Quakers, some even hosted him in their homes.¹²⁹ And yet, Quakers were largely unaffected by the revival, a cool response which contrasted with the emotional enthusiasm that dominated the Great Awakening.¹³⁰ Due to 18th century Quaker concerns for respectability and rejection of evangelical emotional excesses, Slaughter doubts the Great Awakening impacted Woolman's spiritual development.¹³¹

c) The Enlightenment

Woolman's relationship to the Enlightenment is ambiguous.¹³² On one hand, the priority Woolman gave to divine revelation preempted a natural theology and his primitive longing for earlier expressions of Christianity rebuffed the notion that his age was more enlightened than previous ages.¹³³ On the other hand, his writings display the ethical developments of his day.¹³⁴ J. William Frost argues that Woolman did not use enlightenment language positively in his *Journal* in general, and, in fact, the enlightenment was both 'competing and complementary' to Quakerism more broadly.¹³⁵ This leads Slaughter to call Woolman 'a throwback, a survival, a conservative voice'

¹²⁸ Frederick B. Tolles, 'Quietism versus Enthusiasm: The Philadelphia Quakers and the Great Awakening', *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 69 (January 1945): 31.

¹²⁹ Tolles, 'Quietism Versus Enthusiasm', 31.

¹³⁰ Tolles, 'Quietism Versus Enthusiasm', 33.

¹³¹ Slaughter argues that there is no evidence that either the Great Awakening or George Whitefield - 'whose emotional style Quakers rejected' - influenced Woolman. On the other hand, Slaughter notes that the Quaker reforms of the mid-18th century were 'quieter but of a piece with [the] intense spiritual outbreaks across the Atlantic world.' Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 99, 160.

¹³² See also, Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 99-100. See 1.7.

¹³³ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 99-100.

¹³⁴ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 99-100.

¹³⁵ J. William Frost, 'John Woolman and the Enlightenment', in *The Tendering Presence: Essays on John Woolman*, ed. Michael Heller (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 2003), 167, 184-185.

rather than a rationalist.¹³⁶

While Slaughter argues it can be reasonably assumed that Woolman came into contact with Enlightenment material, he also contends that Woolman's 'fundamental philosophy [came] from the bible, from seventeenth-century Quaker texts, and from authors who wrote in the Christian mystical and ascetic traditions.'¹³⁷ This interpretation contradicts Garry Wills' argument that Woolman's antislavery and philanthropy were founded on a revival of Penn's Enlightenment idealism.¹³⁸ Woolman's essays took a different tone, though, as he employed an abstract method of delivery, which can be identified as an adoption of 'rational rather than mystical religion'.¹³⁹ Woolman's changing tone leads Frost to contend that Woolman was inconsistent in his use of Enlightenment thought.¹⁴⁰

d) Quietism

Much of the previous scholarship on 18th century, British North American Quakers, and Woolman himself, has categorised the era as 'Quietist' and heavily influenced by the continental Quietism of Madame Jeanne-Marie de Guyon and François Fénelon.¹⁴¹ Dandelion notes that the Quietist period, which he says stretches

¹³⁶ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 218.

¹³⁷ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 12.

¹³⁸ Garry Wills, *Head and Heart: American Christianities* (New York: Penguin Press, 2007), 140-142, 152.

¹³⁹ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 132.

¹⁴⁰ Frost, 'John Woolman and the Enlightenment', 169.

¹⁴¹ Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, 57, 57-58 n.1, 103; Phyllis Mack, 'In a Female Voice: Preaching and Politics in Eighteenth-Century British Quakerism', in *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity*, ed. Beverly Kienzle (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998), 254-255, 258; Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity', 99; Carole Dale Spencer, 'Anthony Benezet: A Philadelphia Quaker's Testament to the Love of God', in *Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality* (presented at the AAR/SBL, Philadelphia, PA, 2004), 3.

from 1690 into the 1820s,¹⁴² is an 'under-researched and misunderstood' era in Quaker history,¹⁴³ despite the fact that the 18th century produced some of the richest spiritual writings in Quaker history and brought about vigorous social reform.¹⁴⁴ Any such long period of time as the 'Quietist Era' of Quakerism would, by necessity, be prone to generalisation and be elusive to define. The word 'Quietist' was probably first applied to Quakers of the 18th century by Robert Barclay of Reigate, in 1876,¹⁴⁵ and despite rich spiritual records and social benevolence, this period has been characterised as a time of insular focus on self-purity and a world-fearing withdrawal from society.¹⁴⁶

Dandelion attributes this anxious relationship towards society to a diminishment of Second Coming theology, primarily derived from Quaker apologist, Robert Barclay's (1648-1690) theology for living in the 'meantime', which replaced the expectation of an imminent Second Coming.¹⁴⁷ Dandelion's analysis corresponds with Moore's contention that, beginning with the second generation of Quakers, the apocalyptic theology faded and the maintenance of a remnant became a primary concept, as the kingdom of God was linked to saving Quakers from their sufferings.¹⁴⁸ Believing themselves to live in the 'meantime', Dandelion argues, Quakers of the long 18th century created a 'hedge' of 'peculiar' customs to separate themselves from the world and reinforce group identity.¹⁴⁹

Jones notes that, while 18th century Quakers demonstrated a different theology

¹⁴² Pink Dandelion, *An Introduction to Quakerism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 6.

¹⁴³ Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 77.

¹⁴⁴ Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity', 95.

¹⁴⁵ Robert Barclay of Reigate (1833-1876) should not be confused with the Quaker theologian of the late 17th century of the same name. Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity', 96.

¹⁴⁶ Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity', 95; Pink Dandelion, *The Liturgies of Quakerism* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2005), 46-49; Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 59-60.

¹⁴⁷ Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 64.

¹⁴⁸ Moore, *Light in Their Consciences*, 215.

¹⁴⁹ Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 62, 64.

from 17th century Quakers in their understanding of God, both periods were of a mystical spirituality, both had an immanent understanding of the nearness of Christ, and both exhibited a distrust of human reason.¹⁵⁰ These similarities notwithstanding, Jones argues, that the mysticism of the later period was of a different type from that of the earlier period.¹⁵¹ According to Jones, the early Quakers were apostolic, while 18th century Friends were more concerned with cultivating a faithful remnant;¹⁵² the early period practiced a positive mysticism, while that of the later period was negative;¹⁵³ the first Quakers were of a bold disposition, but the 18th century Quakers were timid.¹⁵⁴ Jones argues that a natural development from the theology of the early Quakers and Barclay led the next generation into an exploration of negative mysticism, but that a focus on God's other-worldliness arose in the 18th century and that marked a clear change from early Quaker thought.¹⁵⁵

Jones contends that the emphasis on God's other-worldliness was supported by a dualism between the natural and the supernatural, and, so, only activity contrary to the 'creature' and originated by the 'supernatural' could effect anything positive.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, 33.

¹⁵¹ Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, 33.

¹⁵² Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, 33.

¹⁵³ Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, 33.

¹⁵⁴ Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, 33.

¹⁵⁵ Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, 34.

¹⁵⁶ Jones wrote:

The quietist may, and often did, swing out into a course of action that would make the rationally centered Christian quail with fear and slink to cover. It is not a question of action or of non-action; it is a question of *the right way to initiate action*. The quietist holds a peculiar view in reference to the kind of spring, incentive, or moving that can inaugurate a spiritual act. For him all acts that are motivated by human consciousness, all aims designed, arranged, and planned by reason and the will of man, bear the mark and brand of the "creature" and are below the sphere of the spiritual. All thoughts and strivings that originate in mere man are spiritually barren and unfruitful. There are two levels or storeys to the universe. One level is the realm of "nature," which has passed through a moral catastrophe that broke its inherent connection with the divine and so left it godless and ruined. The other level is the "supernatural" realm where God is enthroned in power and splendour as spiritual Ruler.

The dualistic separation Jones' describes led him to characterise Quaker Quietism as reclusive and focused on self-annihilation.¹⁵⁷ According to Elaine Pryce, the unfavourable conclusions he draws, represent Jones' own modernist and positivist bias and his belief in the redemptive capacity of reason.¹⁵⁸ In fact, Pryce argues that Jones' pejorative understanding of Quietism ignored the quietist elements prevalent among Quakers from their inception.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, while Jones insists that Woolman 'shows the quietist temper in all the aspects of his religious life, both outer and inner',¹⁶⁰ Jones' definition of Quietism does not match the divine-human intimacy Woolman claimed, nor his ability to act for God and, through his efforts, to establish God's will on earth.¹⁶¹

Helpfully, Dandelion moves the conversation around the nature of Quietism forward by noting that the traditional understanding of Quietism as an exclusive, internally focused movement does not make sense when held up to the social reform accomplished in the 18th century.¹⁶² He explains this inconsistency by identifying an additional dualism in 18th century Quaker thought: the traditional dualism of world and home/Meeting is augmented by a dualism between the natural and the supernatural, thereby 'allowing piety to be schooled and nurtured in "non-worldly" spaces in order to facilitate faithful dealings in the world'.¹⁶³ Dandelion argues that, by emphasising Quietism as an approach to following God's will faithfully, rather than as 'human-motivated actions', as Jones interprets it, 'a genealogy of Quietism running back to the

¹⁵⁷ Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, 35.

¹⁵⁸ Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, 74-75.

¹⁵⁹ Elaine Pryce, "'Negative to a Marked Degree' or 'An Intense and Glowing Faith'?: Rufus Jones and Quaker Quietism', *Common Knowledge* 16, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 525-526.

¹⁶⁰ Elaine Pryce, 'The Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism' (presented at the Quaker Studies Research Association, Woodbrooke College, Birmingham, UK, 2010), 9.

¹⁶¹ Jones, *The Later Periods of Quakerism*, 67.

¹⁶² See 3.1, 4.1.3 and 4.2.6.

¹⁶³ Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity', 95.

thinking of George Fox...even before the influence of the continental Quietists' and Robert Barclay, can be seen.¹⁶⁴ However, he argues that Barclay and 18th century Quakers had a different theology from Fox with respect to the distance placed between humanity and God.¹⁶⁵ This experience of distance between God and the individual was primarily illustrated in the lack of assurance of salvation felt by 18th century Quakers.¹⁶⁶ The anxiety around one's salvation status led to personal introspection and corporate self-examination, which contributed to a 'collective Quietist culture'.¹⁶⁷ Noting the increased PYM discipline and disownments in the mid-18th century, Dandelion argues that the focus of religious life became the 'presentation of purity, the continued public cloistering of the peculiar people'.¹⁶⁸

Woolman's apocalypticism calls this analysis into question because of the way a doctrine of divine revelation opened up eschatological purposes on earth for the establishment of Christ's universal reign.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, to label Woolman as a Quietist just because of the era in which he lived ignores the fact that people can think outside of what is expected of someone from their era and can act in ways contradictory to their community and so form unique theological conceptualisations based on a variety of factors and individual proclivities. This thesis demonstrates, in 5.2, that other 18th century Quaker reformers are closer to Dandelions' and Jones' categorisation than Woolman was because they were uncertain of their place in salvation history, and did not claim the same intimacy with God that Woolman did. Yet, they too would act in

¹⁶⁴ Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity', 97.

¹⁶⁵ Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity', 97.

¹⁶⁶ Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity', 97.

¹⁶⁷ Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity', 99.

¹⁶⁸ Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity', 99.

¹⁶⁹ See 2.2 and 4.1.

ways that both affirmed and resisted categorisation.¹⁷⁰

1.3 Biographical Sketch of John Woolman

Woolman was born in 1720 in Northampton, in Burlington County in colonial New Jersey, part of PYM.¹⁷¹ Woolman was raised on his family's farm¹⁷² by devout Quaker parents.¹⁷³ Beginning in his mid-teens, Woolman alternated between experiences of rebellion and 'youthful disobedience',¹⁷⁴ followed by periods of conviction and 'heavenly visitations'.¹⁷⁵ In his late teens, Woolman experienced spiritual growth, as 'from day to day' he matured in spiritual practices, which increased his conviction of Christ's teaching.¹⁷⁶

When he was 21 years old, Woolman left the family farm to begin working as an apprentice and book-keeper at a store nearby and lived in the store's upstairs apartment.¹⁷⁷ His employer was also a tailor and so he learned the trade.¹⁷⁸ The young Woolman attended worship frequently and began to preach during worship, exercising the gift of vocal ministry.¹⁷⁹

Soon thereafter, Woolman was asked by his employer to 'write a bill of sale' for a slave he had sold to an elderly Quaker.¹⁸⁰ Woolman wrote the bill of sale, but insisted

¹⁷⁰ See 5.2.

¹⁷¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 23.

¹⁷² Woolman, 'Journal', 29.

¹⁷³ Woolman, 'Journal', 23-24.

¹⁷⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 25.

¹⁷⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 27.

¹⁷⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 28.

¹⁷⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 29.

¹⁷⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 35.

¹⁷⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 31.

¹⁸⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 32-33.

that slavery was 'a practice inconsistent with the Christian religion.'¹⁸¹ Woolman later regretted taking part in the transaction, notwithstanding his protest.¹⁸² Soon, another man asked young Woolman to write a bill of sale for a slave and Woolman refused.¹⁸³ In 1743, Woolman was formally recognised as a minister by Burlington Monthly Meeting¹⁸⁴ and went as a traveling minister to visit Friends in eastern New Jersey, the first of many such trips.¹⁸⁵ On average, Woolman spent about a month a year on itinerant ministry journeys.¹⁸⁶

Woolman's employer sold the shop after the death of his wife and Woolman started work as a tailor and store-keeper on his own.¹⁸⁷ About this time, in 1746, Woolman felt drawn to visit Friends in the South.¹⁸⁸ On this journey, he was 'exercised' concerning the spiritual consequences of slavery 'not once nor twice, but as a matter fixed on my mind.'¹⁸⁹ In the late 1740s, Woolman traveled to the South, to New England, as well as among Meetings in PYM.¹⁹⁰ Reflecting on the condition of colonial Quakers he saw during his travels, as well as alluding to a growing reform impetus, Woolman noted, 'though our Society in these parts appeared to me to be in a declining condition, yet I believe the Lord hath a people amongst them who labour to serve Him uprightly, but they have many difficulties to encounter.'¹⁹¹

¹⁸¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 33.

¹⁸² Woolman, 'Journal', 33.

¹⁸³ Woolman, 'Journal', 33.

¹⁸⁴ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 120.

¹⁸⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 34.

¹⁸⁶ Phillips P. Moulton, ed., *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1971), 5.

¹⁸⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 36.

¹⁸⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 36-38.

¹⁸⁹ Moulton notes that Woolman used the term 'exercise' to describe 'inner turmoil; concern; awareness of a burden or obligation. The word has many nuances of meaning, all of which concern intellectual or spiritual, as distinguished from physical, exertion.' Woolman, 'Journal', 38; Moulton, ed., *Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*, 314.

¹⁹⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 36-43.

¹⁹¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 43.

The mid-century proved to be a time of family transition for Woolman. He married Sarah Ellis, 'a well-inclined damsel', in 1749.¹⁹² The following year his father, Samuel Woolman, died of fever.¹⁹³ During Samuel's final sickness, he encouraged his son to submit to the 'Overseers of the Press'¹⁹⁴ some thoughts on slavery John had recorded after he returned from his journey to the South in 1746.¹⁹⁵ In 1754, Woolman submitted the manuscript and *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes; Recommended to the Professors of Christianity of Every Denomination* was published.¹⁹⁶ This was the first 'abolitionist tract' issued by PYM, marking an official change in the way PYM Quakers thought about slavery.¹⁹⁷

In 1756, the year Woolman began to write his journal, he discerned that his employment responsibilities were inhibiting what had become an extensive traveling ministry.¹⁹⁸ He moved towards the reduction of his business: 'in a while I wholly laid down merchandise, and followed my trade as a tailor by myself...I also had a nursery of apple trees...'¹⁹⁹ As Woolman reflected on his own manner of living, he developed a concern around the use of wealth and credit in the world at large.²⁰⁰

¹⁹² Woolman, 'Journal', 44.

¹⁹³ Woolman, 'Journal', 44.

¹⁹⁴ In the early 18th century, PYM became increasingly concerned about the public perception of publications by its members, especially those dealing with divisive issues like slavery. In 1709, PYM created a committee with authority to view, correct and reject writings before they went to the press. Then, in 1719, PYM created the 'Overseers of the Press' with broader powers of supervision. Woolman consistently and willingly submitted his writings to the Overseers and accepted their corrections. By the mid-1750s, many of the Overseers were fellow reform-minded ministers and friends of Woolman's. In 1771, the supervision of publications transferred from the Overseers of the Press to Meeting for Sufferings. Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 52; James Proud, ed., *John Woolman and the Affairs of Truth: The Journalist's Essays, Epistles, and Ephemera* (San Francisco, CA: Inner Light Books, 2010), 246-248; Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, 43.

¹⁹⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 44-45.

¹⁹⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 47.

¹⁹⁷ Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, 34-35.

¹⁹⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 53.

¹⁹⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 53-54.

²⁰⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 54-55.

In 1757, Woolman began to regard it as an inconsistency to receive the hospitality of slave owning Friends when his presence in the home increased the work required of slaves.²⁰¹ Woolman developed the practice of paying slaves for their work when staying at the homes of Friends who owned slaves. This practice, at first, caused him angst because he feared it would be regarded as an insult by those hosting him.²⁰² However, through a process of 'resignation'²⁰³ to God's will, he felt empowered to follow the 'leading' through.²⁰⁴

Around 1757, Woolman mentioned in his journal that the taxes raised by the Pennsylvania government caused him turmoil, or an 'inward exercise'.²⁰⁵ Woolman decided that he would not pay taxes, even if he was required to suffer legal consequences.²⁰⁶ His position was made more difficult since 'some of our members who are officers in civil government'²⁰⁷ levied the tax for the purposes of the Seven Years' War. Woolman worried that Friends had become a peaceable people in name only.²⁰⁸

During the 1758 PYM sessions, members took up the issue of the purchasing of slaves.²⁰⁹ The session was sensitive to the concern, but they felt there were too many people in PYM involved in the practice to challenge it.²¹⁰ Woolman provided vocal ministry, at this crucial point, which convinced hesitant Friends that the time was right to denounce slavery and appoint ministers to visit and admonish slave owners.²¹¹

²⁰¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 59-60.

²⁰² Woolman, 'Journal', 60.

²⁰³ See 2.1.1.

²⁰⁴ Woolman understood 'leadings' to be God's direction and prompting to perform specific tasks.

Woolman, 'Journal', 60; see 2.1.1.

²⁰⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 83.

²⁰⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 85-86.

²⁰⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 83-84.

²⁰⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 83-84.

²⁰⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 91-92.

²¹⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 92.

²¹¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 93.

Woolman's concerns for suffering peoples increased in the 1760s. In 1762, Woolman submitted another manuscript on slavery and the PYM Overseers of the Press printed *Considerations on Keeping Negroes: Recommended to the Professors of Christianity, of Every Denomination, Part Second*.²¹² The next year, Woolman journeyed to Wyalusing to visit Native Americans there, even though English-Native American tensions were high.²¹³ The journey impressed upon Woolman how the transatlantic marketplace and material consumption had pushed Native Americans off their original lands and into increasingly dire conditions.²¹⁴

The conditions of slaves in Barbados had been a concern for Woolman and, in 1769, he sought counsel about visiting the West Indies.²¹⁵ At the last moment, after having procured passage on a ship, Woolman felt a spiritual block preventing him from undertaking the voyage and did not go, feeling, instead, that God wanted him to return home.²¹⁶ A few weeks later, Woolman became severely ill with pleurisy and almost died.²¹⁷ During this illness, Woolman dreamed that he was dead – not physically – but that the person named 'John Woolman' was dead and he had become mixed in with the sufferings of humanity.²¹⁸

In 1772, Woolman traveled to England to minister among the Friends there.²¹⁹

²¹² Woolman, 'Journal', 117.

²¹³ Woolman, 'Journal', 123-137.

²¹⁴ Woolman noted that the increase in English settlers made for a continual westward push that displaced Native Americans and removed them from the lands most suitable for their sustenance. Towns in the Pennsylvania interior became centres of trade and expansion as Philadelphia merchants and Euro settlers sought to advance their networks in the interior regions. Woolman, 'Journal', 133-134; Judith Ridner, *A Town In-Between: Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and the Early Mid-Atlantic Interior* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 4-5.

²¹⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 156-159.

²¹⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 158-159; this event is described in Appendix A.

²¹⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 159-160.

²¹⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 185-186; see 4.1.3

²¹⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 163.

He decided against sailing in a cabin because of the superfluity of the decorations, deciding instead to sleep in steerage.²²⁰ While traveling in this manner, he saw first-hand the difficult condition of sailors and the boys who worked the ships.²²¹ He felt these physical difficulties developed a hardness of heart, which society would do better to diminish by reducing consumption and trade.²²² Likewise, he was also convicted²²³ by the condition of the poultry kept in steerage.²²⁴ Woolman was not a vegetarian, but he desired that animals be treated compassionately.²²⁵ While in England, this compulsion would lead him to refrain from using the carriages that ran horses severely due to the negative affects on the horses.²²⁶ Woolman landed in London in June, 1772, and then traveled north to York, where he died of smallpox in October of that year.²²⁷

1.4 Defining Apocalyptic Theology

This section explores the research on what 'apocalypse' and 'apocalypticism' entails and suggests a definition of an apocalyptic theology.

One of the challenges in arriving at a definition of apocalypticism is the variety of perspectives scholars use to approach the subject, whether it be rhetorical, literary or sociological criticism. For example, David Bromley favours the latter approach, arguing that 'apocalypticism is a radical form of organization that is most likely to be elected by groups in social locations experiencing crisis'.²²⁸ He contends that, when individuals or

²²⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 164-165.

²²¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 166-168.

²²² Woolman, 'Journal', 166-168.

²²³ As used herein, to be 'convicted' was to arrive at a spiritual and ethical realisation, often regarding sinfulness in one's self or in the nature of an enterprise.

²²⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 178-179.

²²⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 179.

²²⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 183.

²²⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 191-192.

²²⁸ David Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism: Social and Cultural Elements of Radical Organization',

groups experience historical moments where social structures are laden with a high degree of moral priority, they can form an apocalyptic perspective which rejects and resists the 'existing social order'.²²⁹ In place of the degenerate *status quo*, apocalyptic individuals/groups 'construct themselves as reflecting, representing, and incorporating transcendent ordering logic through which the larger social order is recreated...'.²³⁰ Apocalyptic individuals/groups in moments of crisis, Bromley argues, are organised by resistance to the *status quo* and then form a new cultural identity:

to assert that the contemporary order does not constitute what is and must be, but rather that it embodies an unremitting denial of what is and must be. Socially the apocalyptic response is to distance from the existing social order and create an alternative order that models social relations on a vision of the new world to come.²³¹

This cultural identity leads to what he calls 'a dramatic reconstruction of reality'.²³² In contrast to scholars who prioritise imminent catastrophism in their definitions of apocalyptic, Bromley believes that the apocalypse is not primarily a vision of 'doomsday'.²³³ Instead, 'catastrophe may be imminent, but the apocalypse is a cataclysm with meaning, one that has as its final purpose not destruction but creation'.²³⁴

Bromley's understanding of the social and cultural aspects of apocalypticism is useful when considering the way historical events shape identity.²³⁵ Bromley also identifies the strong community-forming and separatist aspects of apocalypse, as the

in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, ed. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (New York: Routledge, 1997), 34.

²²⁹ Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 34.

²³⁰ Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 34.

²³¹ Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 34.

²³² Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 35.

²³³ Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 34.

²³⁴ Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 34.

²³⁵ Woolman believed that the luxury consumption of the transatlantic marketplace alienated humanity from their true selves in God and rejected the impending divine order. From this perspective Woolman's rejection of what he considered fallen, human wisdom was superseded by the divine revelation of the true ordering of society under God's will, a recreation of social structures and priorities. See 3.2 and 4.1.

group's vision of society competes with the fallen *status quo*.²³⁶ My definition of apocalypse incorporates Bromley's notion of resistance to the normative social ethic and recreation of social structures, but argues that the revelation of God's will would, ultimately, be directed beyond the boundaries of the individual/group, because the *telos* of divine purposes, for Woolman, was universal.²³⁷

Augmenting Bromley's sociological perspective, Thomas Robbins and Susan Palmer take a theological approach, defining apocalypticism as a 'form' of eschatology that 'refers to divinely revealed teachings about the final events of history'.²³⁸ They contend that apocalypticism insists that the latter days are, in some sense, imminent, though the manner in which this is so is hard to determine.²³⁹ They note that the 'apocalyptic imagination...bestows meaning on current events. Present events and tensions are seen as an image or prototype of the ultimate decisive struggle between good and evil and its final resolution at the end of time'.²⁴⁰ In this sense, apocalypticism is '*historicist*' because 'salvation is tied to history and therefore must also be this-worldly and largely collective. What matters is not individual after-life but the eschatological

²³⁶ However, one must ask the question as to whether separatist utopian groups would, thus, be included as apocalyptic, according to Bromley's definition. While Woolman desired to form a community that presented a stark contrast to the dominant ethic of the world around him, his desire was likewise characterised by engagement with the unfaithful and a belief that God's purposes would not be contained within a separatist group, but spread to encompass the whole world. John Chamberlain argues that the early American utopias were often founded on the idea of creating a separated, purified religious community. For example, the Shakers split from the Quakers and formed their own isolated community. John Chamberlain, 'The Spiritual Impetus to Community', in *Utopias: the American Experience*, ed. Otto Kraushaar and Gairdner Moment (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1980), 130; Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 34.

²³⁷ 'The Inhabitants of the Earth have often appeared to me as one great family consisting of various parts, divided by great waters, but united in one common Interest, that is, in living righteously according to that Light and understanding, wherewith Christ doth enlighten every man that cometh into the World.' John Woolman, 'Serious Considerations on Trade', in *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Amelia M. Gummere (New York: Macmillan company, 1922), 398.

²³⁸ Thomas Robbins and Susan Palmer, 'Introduction', in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, ed. Thomas Robbins and Susan J Palmer (New York: Routledge, 1997), 4.

²³⁹ Robbins and Palmer, 'Introduction', 4.

²⁴⁰ Robbins and Palmer, 'Introduction', 5.

destiny of a collectivity.²⁴¹ However, they note that there is a great diversity in definitions of apocalyptic and varying degrees of determinism, dualism and catastrophism.²⁴²

Within the scholarship on apocalypticism, are those works that emphasise the revelatory nature of apocalypticism²⁴³ and those that emphasise the catastrophic.²⁴⁴ This thesis follows the non-catastrophic, revelatory definitions of apocalypticism because requiring catastrophe to be crucial to apocalypticism does not account for the diversity of texts considered apocalyptic.²⁴⁵ The scholarship on revelatory, non-catastrophic apocalypticism is explored below.

Stephen O'Leary advocates less causal necessity between apocalypticism and catastrophism.²⁴⁶ His rhetorical perspective emphasises the symbolic function of apocalypticism in confronting the problem of evil 'through discursive construction of temporality'.²⁴⁷ O'Leary argues that the conflict between good and evil is an inevitable and continuously recurrent element of life, which is rooted in human frailty.²⁴⁸ He

²⁴¹ Robbins and Palmer, 'Introduction', 6.

²⁴² Robbins and Palmer, 'Introduction', 6-7.

²⁴³ Craig Hill, *In God's Time: The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002), 60-61.

²⁴⁴ For fuller discussions of these debates, see, Catherine Wessinger, 'Millennialism With and Without Mayhem', in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, ed. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (New York: Routledge, 1997), 49-50; Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 34-35; George Eldon Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' *Journal of Biblical Literature* 76, no. 3 (September 1957): 198; Christopher Partridge, 'The End is Nigh: Failed Prophecy, Apocalypticism, and the Rationalization of Violence in New Religious Eschatologies', in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry Walls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 192-193; Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus, Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), x.

²⁴⁵ For example, Robbins and Palmer contend that the 'Age of Aquarius' and Eastern apocalypses tended to be cyclical rather than linearly directed towards catastrophe. In these traditions, apocalypses can be joyous and redemptive. Robin Barnes, 'Images of Hope and Despair: Western Apocalypticism: ca. 1500-1800', in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: Continuum, 1998), 161; Robbins and Palmer, 'Introduction', 5.

²⁴⁶ Stephen O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 74-75.

²⁴⁷ O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 14.

²⁴⁸ O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 74.

contends that the battle between good and evil will not be satisfied through a final and imminent cataclysmic victory, which ties up all the loose ends, because evil is an inherent part of human existence and, therefore, can never be overcome completely.²⁴⁹ Thus, evil is 'seen as periodic setbacks to the progress of the church', and traditional signs of 'imminent Judgment' – such as wars, eclipses and natural disasters – are understood to be 'recurrent and normative'.²⁵⁰ Apocalyptic rhetoric, O'Leary contends, serves the purpose of addressing the continual emergence of evil throughout history by providing a language that explains expectations of future deliverance and survival of present tragedy.²⁵¹ O'Leary's rhetorical perspective discovers, among apocalyptic writings, a considerable amount of latitude in the intensity of apocalyptic fervour,²⁵² which provides an important counterbalance to scholars who rigidly define apocalyptic as catastrophic.

In his study of apocalyptic literature from the inter-testamental and early Church periods, Craig Hill argues that apocalyptic thought:

presupposes that the natural world of humans interacts with a supernatural world of angels and demons, and that the destiny of the two realms is inextricably intertwined. The true nature of reality is mysterious, unavailable to the senses, and so accessible only by revelation. This revelation most often concerns a coming judgment of the ungodly and a subsequent restoration of Israel under the kingship of God or the Messiah.²⁵³

Several aspects of Hill's definition shed light on Woolman's apocalypticism. Firstly, the emphasis on the interaction between the natural and supernatural coincides with Woolman's visions, discernment of revelation and belief that God intervened in human

²⁴⁹ O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 74.

²⁵⁰ O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 75.

²⁵¹ O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 14.

²⁵² O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse*, 14.

²⁵³ Hill, *In God's Time*, 60–61.

affairs to rule society directly.²⁵⁴ Secondly, Hill's description of the secret unfolding of true reality, which is only available through revelation, concurs with Woolman's theology of divine revelation,²⁵⁵ which contradicted the normative, but fallen 'worldly' wisdom,²⁵⁶ and the organisation of a true Church in a new state of obedience under the direct governance of Christ.²⁵⁷ Thirdly, Hill notes a sense of impending judgment as God's will was transgressed, a feature Woolman also incorporated through his interpretation of world events and epidemics as God's messengers.²⁵⁸

Hill argues that, 'theologically, the point of the apocalypse is that, despite all appearances to the contrary, God has everything under control. Ultimately, God's righteousness will prevail.'²⁵⁹ This feature is 'crucial', because at the heart of apocalyptic literature is the question of what God's justice demands in the face of prevailing apostasy.²⁶⁰ 'Apocalyptic thinking flourishes in times of dislocation and crisis', Hill argues.²⁶¹

Likewise, Walter Schmithals argues that the essence of apocalyptic in Jewish literature was the revelation of secret, supernatural things. However, he couples this with a rather open, undefined understanding of what the result of that revelation would be:

The main concern in apocalyptic is a set of truths which are not generally accessible and do not at once result from the rational consideration of reality, but must be revealed to man, must be announced to him from beyond himself. What the apocalyptic has to say is therefore new to his

²⁵⁴ See 2.1.2 and 2.2; Hill, *In God's Time*, 60–61.

²⁵⁵ See 2.2 and 4.1.3; Hill, *In God's Time*, 60–61.

²⁵⁶ See 3.2; Hill, *In God's Time*, 60–61.

²⁵⁷ See 4.1.3; Hill, *In God's Time*, 60–61.

²⁵⁸ See 4.3; Hill, *In God's Time*, 60–61.

²⁵⁹ Hill, *In God's Time*, 62; Hill, *In God's Time*, 60–61.

²⁶⁰ Hill, *In God's Time*, 63; see also, Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 192.

²⁶¹ For Woolman, the transatlantic marketplace constituted a crisis moment. See 1.2.4 a) and 4.1; Hill, *In God's Time*, 63.

hearers; the one truth, formerly unknown but now revealed.²⁶²

This revelation, Schmithals contends, is the revelation of an 'event in the future, even though it might be the immediate future.'²⁶³ Schmithals contends that the apocalypticist, who already knows the future, 'already stands, even now, proleptically at the end of history, can survey it *entire*, and in the light of future events can also understand the past, interpret it, and make it comprehensible as a necessary step toward the established goal of the ages.'²⁶⁴

Like Hill, Schmithal contends that apocalyptic literature contains many variables. For example, some Jewish apocalyptic writings have less dualism than others: 'not all apocalypticists venture to set a mythical rival in opposition to God.'²⁶⁵ The exact manifestation of the ultimate fulfillment of divine purposes was also variable, though apocalyptic literature holds in common the sense that the next age would not just be a happier continuation of the present, but 'an entirely new, different age...Peace will then take the place of war, light will replace darkness, and eternal joy will replace death... The old eon knows no abiding peace, its ways are uncertain and slippery.'²⁶⁶ This revelation of divine fulfillment lends itself to a 'teleological way of thinking about history, that is, the idea of a definitive goal and end of history.'²⁶⁷

In a recent study of American 'alternative' religious groups often identified as apocalyptic – such as the Shakers, Mormons and Seventh-Day Adventists – Stephen Stein mitigates the necessity of a predetermined catastrophic end to history, as long as

²⁶² Walter Schmithals, *The Apocalyptic Movement, Introduction & Interpretation*, trans. John Steely (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1975), 14.

²⁶³ Schmithals, *The Apocalyptic Movement*, 17.

²⁶⁴ Schmithals, *The Apocalyptic Movement*, 18; see also, Gwyn, 'Come Again?' 8.

²⁶⁵ Schmithals, *The Apocalyptic Movement*, 23.

²⁶⁶ Schmithals, *The Apocalyptic Movement*, 22.

²⁶⁷ Schmithals, *The Apocalyptic Movement*, 218.

the current age is replaced with a new age.²⁶⁸ He contends that apocalypticism should be defined as:

belief in an imminent end to the present order, either through catastrophic destruction and conflagration or through establishment of an ideal society - millennial or utopian. This broad definition is necessary because the apocalyptic views associated with America's alternative religions are extremely diverse. A narrow definition does not do justice to the range of ideas found in these communities.²⁶⁹

Stein's research is important for this study because it acknowledges that apocalyptic ideas have existed outside of Jewish, inter-testamental and early Christian thought worlds.²⁷⁰ Moreover, by widening the definition of apocalyptic to fit American religious groups, Stein implies that historical context shapes the way apocalypticism might be embodied.²⁷¹ For O'Leary, Hill, Schmithal and Stein, the central tenet of apocalypticism is divine revelation to a human recipient which envisages the end of one world and the beginning of another however that end might take place.

Martinus de Boer complements this analysis from the field of biblical studies noting that 'the book of Revelation is in many ways distinctive and cannot be taken as the measure of all expressions of an apocalyptic-eschatological worldview.'²⁷² de Boer argues that Revelation is unique in ancient manuscripts: 'The sheer quantity and richness of Revelation's symbolism and imagery are really without parallel in contemporary sources, whether Jewish or Christian...'²⁷³ As such, he argues that 'apocalyptic eschatology can be given expression in much less vivid, certainly less lurid, imagery

²⁶⁸ Stephen Stein, 'Apocalypticism Outside the Mainstream in the United States', in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism*, ed. Bernard McGinn, John J. Collins, and Stephen Stein (New York: Continuum, 2003), 493.

²⁶⁹ Stein, 'Apocalypticism Outside the Mainstream', 493.

²⁷⁰ Stein, 'Apocalypticism Outside the Mainstream', 493.

²⁷¹ Stein, 'Apocalypticism Outside the Mainstream', 493.

²⁷² M. C. de Boer, 'Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology', in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism*, ed. Bernard McGinn, John J. Collins and Stephen Stein (New York: Continuum, 2003), 170.

²⁷³ de Boer, 'Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology', 170.

and language...²⁷⁴ de Boer's study of biblical and inter-testamental apocalyptic eschatology is useful because he identifies the diversity of tone that can accompany apocalyptic language, as well as the way cultural distinctions can shape the particularity of apocalyptic theology.²⁷⁵ This nuance opens the door for analysis of Woolman's theology under the rubric of apocalypticism without necessitating that it be identical in language and imagery to the book of Revelation. 'Nevertheless', de Boer argues, 'what is called "apocalyptic eschatology,"...is normally assumed to bear at least a "family resemblance" to the eschatology found in the book of Revelation; the family resemblance is discernible in the dualism of the two world ages, which is a matter of divine revelation.'²⁷⁶ As the scholarship addressed so far suggests, there is a good case to be made for defining apocalyptic as the revelation of the secret workings of God to the faithful who await the transformation of history. Such a definition allows for the many variables in tone, urgency and climax within apocalyptic expression.²⁷⁷

In a 1979 article, John J. Collins defines the 'master-paradigm' of apocalyptic in a framework involving both the manner and content of revelation.²⁷⁸ 'The content embraces historical and eschatological events on a temporal axis and otherworldly beings and places on a spatial axis.'²⁷⁹ Collins also notes that apocalyptic themes are often spread throughout a corpus of writing in a subordinate way; a piece of literature can be apocalyptic even though apocalyptic is only one of many themes in the piece.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁴ de Boer, 'Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology', 170.

²⁷⁵ de Boer, 'Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology', 170.

²⁷⁶ de Boer, 'Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology', 170.

²⁷⁷ See, Schmithals, *The Apocalyptic Movement*, 23.

²⁷⁸ John J. Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', ed. John J. Collins, *Semeia: Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre* 14 (1979): 5.

²⁷⁹ Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', 5.

²⁸⁰ This is certainly true for Woolman. Evidence of his apocalypticism is spread throughout his writings, sometimes taking up more and sometimes less of the thrust of any particular work. Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', 8.

He also notes that 'it is apparent that no one apocalypse contains all the elements noted in the paradigm...Again, not all these elements are equally important.'²⁸¹ Helpfully, Collins draws attention to the purpose of apocalyptic, to alter and subvert established behaviour understood by the faithful to be apostate: 'There is little doubt that all apocalypses seek to influence the lives of their readers and many imply exhortation to a specific course of action. The hortatory purpose is usually implicit in the work as a whole', but might only be explicit in some portions of that work.²⁸²

Collins synthesises the most common elements into this definition:

"Apocalypse" is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.²⁸³

Collins consistently identifies apocalyptic as a form of literature, but I suggest apocalyptic also refers to particular beliefs about God and a particular way of understanding the world. The records of those beliefs are generally transmitted in writing, so Collins' emphasis on the *literary* aspects of apocalyptic is important, however, this thesis does not focus on the literary or rhetorical components of Woolman's writing. Rather, I contend that Woolman's writings corresponded to real beliefs and presuppositions about the world, God and his place in history and, therefore, an apocalyptic *theology* can be derived from his writings.

More recently, Collins has refined the chief characteristics of apocalyptic into this definition:

the essential ingredients of this [apocalyptic] worldview were a reliance on

²⁸¹ Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', 8.

²⁸² Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', 9.

²⁸³ Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', 9.

supernatural revelation, over and above received tradition and human reasoning; a sense that human affairs are determined to a great degree by supernatural agents; and the belief that human life is subject to divine judgment, culminating in reward or punishment after death...which had far-reaching implications for ethical values and attitudes in this life.²⁸⁴

Collins argues that apocalyptic thought arises out of a sense of disjointedness with the prevailing ethic of the larger society: 'The visionaries look to another world, either in the heavens or in the eschatological future, because this world is unsatisfactory...Typically, the appeal for divine intervention is necessitated because the world is believed to be in the grip of hostile powers.'²⁸⁵ Collins' definition here, in conjunction with his much longer, more exhaustive and nuanced 1979 definition, serves as an appropriate starting point for a discussion of Woolman's apocalyptic theology because it is sufficiently broad to allow for apocalyptic sentiments outside of the inter-testamental and early Church contexts and is comprised of theological characteristics – such as revelation, divine intervention, eschatology, judgment and transformed behaviour – which can be identified in Woolman's extant works.

Another way to consider apocalyptic is through George Eldon Ladd's framework of prophetic-apocalyptic. Ladd argues that the eschatology of the Hebrew prophets held that God's purposes would be fulfilled within history, which, some scholars contend, is different from an apocalyptic eschatology of catastrophic eschatological fulfillment divorced from human action within history.²⁸⁶ However, he argues that 'prophetic-apocalyptic religion is to be contrasted with a non-prophetic apocalyptic, which largely characterises the eschatology of the Jewish apocryphal literature.'²⁸⁷ Ladd argues that

²⁸⁴ John J. Collins, 'From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End', in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism*, ed. Bernard McGinn, John J. Collins and Stephen Stein (New York: Continuum, 2003), 85.

²⁸⁵ Collins, 'From Prophecy to Apocalypticism', 86.

²⁸⁶ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 196.

²⁸⁷ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 198.

'non-prophetic' apocalyptic is different from 'prophetic-apocalyptic' in two ways: 1) non-prophetic apocalyptic was 'basically pessimistic as to the character of present history'; and 2) non-prophetic apocalyptic was 'characterised by ethical passivity'.²⁸⁸

On the other hand, Ladd argues, the Hebrew prophets believed God was active in present historical occurrence *as well as* in 'the eschatological consummation for the salvation' of God's people.²⁸⁹ Thus, prophetic-apocalyptic maintained a belief that God would work through humanity in the world, whereas non-prophetic apocalyptic viewed humanity and the world as irreparably corrupt and unable to contribute anything positive towards salvation or the fulfillment of God's purposes beyond 'hope' in God's completely supernatural intervention.²⁹⁰ Whereas the Hebrew prophets wanted to exhort their people to faithfulness and repentance and used apocalyptic eschatology to warn and admonish to righteousness, non-prophetic apocalyptic writers believed that the sufferings of the current age were due to the evil present in the world.²⁹¹ The non-prophetic apocalyptic communities believed that they were 'sacrosanct'; they must only wait for God to act.²⁹² This effectively divorced the ethical conduct of the non-prophetic apocalyptic communities from their own actions. With few exceptions:

there is almost no ethical exhortation in the entire corpus of non-canonical apocalyptic literature, and it is notable that this material lacks many of the usual characteristics of the apocalyptic genre. Non-prophetic apocalyptic is little concerned with ethical conduct: God's people keep the Law; they are righteous; future salvation is theirs.²⁹³

Ladd places Jesus in the prophetic-apocalyptic category because his teaching was both

²⁸⁸ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 198.

²⁸⁹ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 198.

²⁹⁰ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 198.

²⁹¹ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 198-199.

²⁹² Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 198-199.

²⁹³ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 199.

'eschatologically apocalyptic and ethically prophetic.'²⁹⁴ The key to Jesus' apocalypticism, according to Ladd, was 'the dynamic concept of the kingdom of God... The kingdom of God is God's kingly rule.'²⁹⁵

Firstly, Ladd contends that Jesus not only had hope for a future deliverance, but his optimism in God's activity invaded the present:

The very core of his message about the kingdom of God is that the powers of the future eschatological reign have entered into history in advance of their apocalyptic manifestation and are at work now in the world in a hidden form within and among men. This is the "mystery of the kingdom".²⁹⁶

Thus, while Jesus did recognise that evil existed in the present age, he did not believe the world was abandoned to evil. On the contrary, he believed that God had already begun to manifest God's kingly reign and real salvation was available to the faithful through God's kingdom in the present.²⁹⁷ 'The powers of the age to come have invaded the present evil age. Henceforth, God's kingdom is present and active in history, in and through the new people of God who experience the power of the kingdom.'²⁹⁸

Secondly, Ladd contends that, in the message of the kingdom of God, Jesus claimed that God's reign was already present in the world, though in a hidden form.²⁹⁹ Therefore, the message of the kingdom of God contained 'a genuine prophetic ethic' which 'is both an ethic of preparation for the kingdom and of realization of the kingdom'.³⁰⁰ Ladd argues that Jesus taught, in the Sermon on the Mount, that the faithful

²⁹⁴ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 199.

²⁹⁵ Ladd's analysis of the way a kingdom of God theology relates to a prophetic-apocalyptic theology is important for this thesis because Woolman also utilised kingdom of God language in his apocalyptic theology and emphasised God's governance over human affairs. Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 199.

²⁹⁶ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 199.

²⁹⁷ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 199.

²⁹⁸ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 199-200.

²⁹⁹ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 200.

³⁰⁰ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 200.

are those completely submitted to God's kingdom in this life and whose actions subvert the present order with God's countervailing righteousness.³⁰¹ Moreover, Bromley argues that apocalyptic was constructed through a 'prophetic method' that undermined the *status quo* and rejected the established social order by proclaiming an identity grounded in a new, impending order.³⁰² For the apocalyptic community 'the result is a collective existence located between the old order, whose demise is presumed imminent, and the new order, which has yet to be born.'³⁰³

This scholarship on apocalypticism has not been applied to John Woolman or 18th century Quakers and this constitutes a gap in the scholarship. Indeed, it is telling that an essay, with the grand title 'Apocalypticism in Colonial North America', did not see fit to expand beyond Puritanism and the confines of New England.³⁰⁴ Therefore, my working definition of apocalyptic theology incorporates the scholarship examined in this sub-section and is concisely stated as:

Apocalyptic theology is constituted through a supernatural revelation disclosed to a human recipient. It describes an alternative theologically-social ordering. As such, it frames the world of human affairs and societal organisation within transcendent and eternal purposes and envisages the impending victory of God's reign over apostasy. The recipient of divine revelation serves as a harbinger of the age to come and participates in the eschatological unfolding through practical embodiments which enact God's reign in human affairs.

While the nuance and supporting features of this definition are explored throughout this thesis, this definition is chiefly demonstrated through the themes of revelation, propheticism and eschatology.

³⁰¹ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 200.

³⁰² Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 32–33.

³⁰³ Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 33.

³⁰⁴ Reiner Smolinski, 'Apocalypticism in Colonial North America', in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism*, ed. Bernard McGinn, John J. Collins and Stephen Stein (New York: Continuum, 2003), 441–466.

1.5 Sources and Method

Three broad categories of Woolman's writings are extant: a) essays; b) the journal; and, c) correspondence, official records and ephemera. This section outlines the sources used for this study and their provenance. It then explores the micro-theological approach used in the analysis of the texts.

a) Essays

Woolman's essays have been reprinted in Amelia Mott Gummere's 1922 edition, *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman*,³⁰⁵ and Phillips Moulton's 1971 edition, *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*. These printed editions of the essays are used throughout this thesis for ease of cross-reference by other scholars. Moreover, both editions adhere faithfully to Woolman's manuscripts, or when a manuscript is unavailable, follow the earliest available edition of an essay. Moulton's edition of Woolman's two antislavery tracts and 'Plea for the Poor; or a Word of Remembrance and

³⁰⁵ Amelia M. Gummere, ed., *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1922). Proud has recently published a collection of Woolman's PYM epistles, some essays and other writings not published elsewhere. Proud's collection is edited for modernisation and not used herein when Moulton and Gummere contain the same material. Included in Proud's collection is Woolman's primer, *A First Book for Children*. The 1774 third edition of the primer is located at Friends House, London and a copy of it is held at Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College. Proud's edition is the first that would be easily accessible to modern scholars. Plank has explored the primer in some detail along with Woolman's school teaching in the 1760s and is a helpful resource for understanding Woolman's efforts and goals as a teacher of children. This thesis does not use the primer in identifying Woolman's theology. Though Woolman did make use of aphorisms with moral lessons in the primer, it was intended to teach young children and so is not essential to express the nuance of his theology. Proud, *John Woolman and the Affairs of Truth*; John Woolman, 'A First Book for Children: Much Useful Reading being Sullied and Torn by Children in Schools Before They can Read, this Book is Intended to Save Unnecessary Expense', in *John Woolman and the Affairs of Truth: The Journalist's Essays, Epistles, and Ephemera*, ed. James Proud (San Francisco, CA: Inner Light Books, 2010), 129–145; John Woolman, *A First Book for Children: Much Useful Reading Being Sullied and Torn by Children in Schools Before They Can Read, This Book Is Intended to Save Unnecessary Expence*, The third edition enlarged. (Philadelphia: Printed and sold by Joseph Crukshank, in Second-Street; and by Benjamin Ferris, Stationer and bookbinder in Wilmington, 1774); Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 28–30, 214.

'Caution to the Rich' are preferred over those of Gummere because of the strong manuscript evidence for his edition and his comparisons between manuscripts.³⁰⁶

With regard to the essays not found in Moulton, Gummere's collection of Woolman's essays is a reliable resource.³⁰⁷ In a comparison between Gummere's text and Woolman's manuscripts, where manuscripts were available, Gummere mainly

³⁰⁶ The whereabouts of the manuscripts of Woolman's two antislavery tracts - *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes: Recommended to the Professors of Christianity of Every Denomination* (1754) and *Considerations on Keeping Negroes: Recommended to the Professors of Christianity of Every Denomination* (1762) - are unknown and subsequent printings of these two essays were based on the first printed editions. These two essays, along with 'A Plea for the Poor; or a Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich' - which was first published in 1793 as *A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich* - are transcribed accurately in Phillips Moulton's *Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*.

There are two holographs of 'A Plea for the Poor', alternatively entitled 'A Plea for the Poor' (MS *Plea*) and 'A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich' (MS W). Moulton's edition of 'A Plea for the Poor, or A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich' is based on MS *Plea*. MS W was not discovered until Moulton's edition was set in type. However, Moulton prepared an addendum to his edition which highlights the differences between the two manuscripts. The majority of the text is identical, with some substantive differences. Besides minor differences in capitalisation and punctuation, MS *Plea* is a fuller version of MS W, containing several omissions from MS W and three additional chapters at the end. In light of the considerable markings and marginal notes found on both holographs, it is evident that Woolman was not finished with the essay at the time of his death. Woolman made some identical changes in both manuscripts, but in places made additional revisions to MS *Plea* which he did not make to MS W. In these instances, MS. *Plea* appears to be the later version. Because of these corrections and the additional text found in MS. *Plea*, Moulton, and this author, are comfortable using MS *Plea* and, thus, Moulton's edition of it, as the definitive text. MS W is located in the Special Collections at Haverford College and MS *Plea* is embedded in Folio A at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Moulton, *Journal and Major Essays*, 195-197, 319-327; John Woolman, *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes: Recommended to the Professors of Christianity of Every Denomination* (Philadelphia: James Chappin, 1754); John Woolman, *Considerations on Keeping Negroes: Recommended to the Professors of Christianity, of Every Denomination. Part Second* (Philadelphia: B. Franklin and D. Hall, 1762); John Woolman, *A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich* (Dublin, 1793); John Woolman, 'A Word of Remembrance and Caution to the Rich', Holograph Ms. (n.p., n.d.), Haverford College Library, Special Collections; John Woolman, 'MS. *Plea*', n.d., Woolman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

³⁰⁷ The manuscript of Woolman's 1768 essay, *Considerations on Pure Wisdom and Human Policy; on Labour; on Schools; and on the Right Use of the Lord's Outward Gifts* - referred to in this thesis as 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom' - is missing and all printings are based on a 1773 collection of Woolman's writings. This thesis follows the edition of this essay, as is the case with the other essays identified in this paragraph, found in Gummere's *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman*. Woolman's 'Serious Considerations on Trade' was left unpublished until Gummere printed it verbatim. The manuscript of *Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind, and how it is to be Maintained* is held at the Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College and contains Woolman's corrections. Gummere reprinted the essay, copying Woolman's corrections into her edition. The manuscript of Woolman's 1772 'Conversations on the True Harmony of Mankind and how it may be Promoted' - unpublished until 1837 - is found in Folio A at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and is followed by Gummere.

There is some debate concerning the date of the first printing of *Considerations on Pure*

followed Woolman, but on occasion maintained in her edition a word or clause that Woolman may have intended to delete for the sake of clarity. In these cases, the additions are consistent with the meaning of the essay. There is an exception where Gummere has not kept closely to what is likely to have been Woolman's version; this concerns the 'Last Essays'.³⁰⁸ Here, Gummere has included changes which might not represent Woolman's own intentions. This has come about because changes were suggested on a hand-written hard copy of the essays. Neither the handwriting on the hard-copy, nor that of the changes, match Woolman's, and since Woolman's own manuscript is unavailable, his intention is unclear.³⁰⁹ However, since the changes to the

Wisdom. In an explanatory note in Folio A at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania which goes along with a manuscript of 'Serious Considerations on Trade' – which Woolman intended to be included in *Considerations on Pure Wisdom*, but that the Overseers of the Press requested not to be included in the essay – Woolman wrote that *Considerations on Pure Wisdom* was printed in 1758. Gummere and Slaughter follow this reference in dating the essay's publication to 1758. However, Proud demonstrates that the preponderance of evidence clearly identifies 1768 as the date of publication, which Plank also asserts. This thesis believes the evidence overwhelmingly identifies 1768 as the date of printing. Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 222-224; Proud, *John Woolman and the Affairs of Truth*, 111 fn. 3; Gummere, ed., *Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, 382, 459, 488; Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 268 fn. 20; John Woolman, 'Journal Folio A', n.d., Woolman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; John Woolman, *Serious Considerations on Various Subjects of Importance* (London: Printed and sold by Mary Hinde, 1773); Woolman, 'Serious Considerations on Trade', 397-401; John Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 1772, Swarthmore College, Friends Historical Library.

³⁰⁸ Gummere's edition of Woolman's 'Last Essays' follows revisions on the earliest manuscript of Woolman's essays available, which is not in Woolman's hand, but was apparently copied from Woolman's manuscripts. Since Gummere preserves all of the text of the 'Last Essays', but in rearranged form and the meaning of these essays remains intact, it is an essential collection and is the basis of the text used here. The titles of the essays in Gummere's *Journal and Essays of John Woolman* are: 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves'; 'On the Slave Trade'; 'On Trading in Superfluities'; 'On a Sailor's Life' and 'On Silent Worship'. However, in a recently rediscovered hand copy of MS Y, the manuscript of Woolman's last essays, the titles are 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves'; 'On the Slave Trade'; 'On a Sailor's Life'; 'On Silent Worship' and 'Concerning the Ministry'. Written in the margins and between the lines of the copy of MS Y are notes for rearranging the essays, which Gummere followed to come up with her organisation. However, since MS Y is not in Woolman's hand and the notes appear to be written in after the manuscript was copied, it is doubtful that they represent Woolman's intentions, though it is impossible to assert this with certainty. Nonetheless, the rearranged essays in Gummere's collection maintain their integrity sufficiently that this thesis is comfortable using Gummere as the text for these essays, except where specifically noted herein. For a description of the rearrangements made to MS Y, and a description of the recent rediscovery of MS Y, see Jon R. Kershner, 'The York Manuscript: John Woolman's Final Writings', *Quaker History*, Forthcoming. Gummere, *Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, 313-315, 488-510; John Woolman, 'Copy of MS Y', 1772, Friends House Library, LSF TEMP MSS 1002.

³⁰⁹ However, Gummere did transcribe one of the 'Last Essays' incorrectly, 'Concerning the Ministry'.

hard-copy were suggested after it had been made, it is doubtful that the changes originated from Woolman's version.³¹⁰

b) The Journal

There are three primary journal manuscripts, known as MS A, MS B and MS C,³¹¹ drafted prior to Woolman's trip to England in 1772. Of these manuscripts, Moulton is convincing when he asserts that MS B was Woolman's final draft and the one submitted to PYM for publication and, thus, it forms the basis for his edition of the *Journal*.³¹² Gummere, on the other hand, used MS A as the basis for her edition, which Moulton believes was a preliminary draft of the journal.³¹³

The Borthwick Institute, University of York, houses the manuscript journal for the first half of Woolman's voyage to England in 1772.³¹⁴ Friends House Library in London has Woolman's manuscript journal of the second half of his voyage to England,³¹⁵ as well as the most readable copy of Woolman's revised and final version of

Gummere tacked this essay onto the end of the *Journal* instead of treating it as a separate essay as MS Y did and made other errors that are identified in the discussion in 4.3.2. 'Concerning the Ministry', was first printed as an extract in 1773. Kershner, 'The York Manuscript'; Geoffrey Plank, 'The First Person in Antislavery Literature: John Woolman, his Clothes and his Journal', *Slavery and Abolition* 30, no. 1 (March 2009): 75; John Woolman, *An Extract from John Woolman's Journal in Manuscript, Concerning the Ministry* (London, 1773).

³¹⁰ Kershner, 'The York Manuscript'.

³¹¹ Woolman's three journal manuscripts are: 1) MS A, which is part of Folio A, held at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and contains an early manuscript of chapters 1-10 of the journal; 2) MS B was completed between 1770 and Woolman's journey to England in 1772. It is held in the Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College and is the draft he intended for printing; 3) MS C is the earliest holograph of Woolman's journal. It is 48 pages long, covering the years 1720-1747. MS A was prepared from MS C. MS C is held in the Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College. John Woolman, 'Journal, Manuscript B', n.d., Swarthmore College, Friends Historical Library; Woolman, 'Journal Folio A'; John Woolman, 'Journal Manuscript C, abbreviated, 1720-1747', Swarthmore College, Friends Historical Library; Moulton, *Journal and Major Essays*, 283-284.

³¹² Moulton, *Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*, 278-281.

³¹³ Moulton, *Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*, 278-281.

³¹⁴ John Woolman, 'MS T1, John Woolman's Sea Journal', 1772, Borthwick Institute, University of York.

³¹⁵ John Woolman, 'MS T2, Manuscript of John Woolman's Sea Journal', 1772, Luke Howard Manuscripts, Friends House Library.

his journal of the sea voyage and of his travels in England.³¹⁶ Moulton's edition of the *Journal* contains, in the main body of the text, Woolman's final draft, with footnotes that describe deviations between the manuscripts. Except in a few cases, where greater clarity is achieved by going directly to the manuscripts, Moulton's edition is followed in this thesis.

The identification of the final draft of Woolman's journal is important because the earliest printed editions of his *Journal*³¹⁷ were edited through official Yearly Meeting oversight, as was the custom for works submitted for publication among Friends.³¹⁸ Some of Woolman's most cutting criticisms of British society were left out of the first edition of the *Journal*.³¹⁹ However, Moulton's *The Journal and Major Essays* reestablishes Woolman's final text, based on a comparison of the manuscripts, and contains an explanation of Moulton's editorial decision making process.³²⁰

However, a word must be said here about the use of Woolman's *Journal* as a source for analysing his theology. Woolman intended his *Journal* to be read by posterity as a teaching aid.³²¹ To some extent, Woolman's self-consciousness, as he wrote his *Journal*, is played out in the writing.³²² Also, Woolman began his *Journal* at the age of

³¹⁶ The original version of Woolman's compiled Sea and English journals, known as MS S, is housed at Swarthmore, but has suffered some deterioration. The copy of MS Y at Friends House, London, is substantially the same text with only minor and inconsequential deviations due to error in transcription. However, the document is in a better condition than the original of MS S. Woolman, 'Copy of MS Y', 1772, Friends House Library; John Woolman, 'English Journal Manuscript S', 1772, Swarthmore College, Friends Historical Library.

³¹⁷ John Woolman, *The Works of John Woolman, in Two Parts* (London: Printed for and sold by T. Letchworth, 1775).

³¹⁸ Plank, 'First Person in Antislavery Literature', 81.

³¹⁹ Plank, 'First Person in Antislavery Literature', 74-75.

³²⁰ Woolman, *Journal and Major Essays*, 273-282.

³²¹ Luella Wright argues that, by the early 18th century, Quaker 'journals were written with a view toward... publication' and intended to have 'didactic' purposes. Luella Wright, *The Literary Life of the Early Friends, 1650-1725* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), 160. See also, Michael Heller, 'Soft Persuasion: A Rhetorical Analysis of John Woolman's Essays and *Journal*' (Ph. D. Dissertation, Arizona State University, 1989), 5-6; Birkel, *Near Sympathy*, 112.

³²² Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 192.

36, while the first entry in his *Journal* was a recollection that occurred when he was seven years old.³²³ The sections of the *Journal* covering his childhood and young adult years, therefore, were reconstructions of past events. Quaker journals were not meant to be abstract autobiographies, but narrative teaching tools, describing the inner and outer life of a person acknowledged by the community to be of spiritual value to others.³²⁴ From this perspective, Woolman's self-styling or favourable recollections are part of the genre itself and part of the holistic meaning Woolman expressed, whether or not the order of events lined up in an historically chronological manner.³²⁵ John Tosh has noted that the detection of a bias in documentary material provokes the question as to whether or not that bias is historically important.³²⁶ In the *Journal*, Woolman demonstrated a bias towards higher degrees of religious sacrifice and a suspicion of the effects of the transatlantic marketplace. These biases are important factors in that they illustrate Woolman's concept of the challenges that faced his faith community and situate his theology in his concerns for colonial society.

c) Correspondence, Official Records and Ephemera

This thesis also refers to letters *from* Woolman and letters *about* Woolman

³²³ Woolman, 'Journal', 23.

³²⁴ Wright contends that the Quaker journal 'may be defined as an account...of the personal and religious life of one who became so identified with the Quaker group after he had once surrendered himself to its teachings, that his memoirs expressed the aims and beliefs of the Society.' It was their intention, she argues, to 'make religion both practical and spiritual.' Wright, *Literary Life of the Early Friends*, 156, 155. See also, Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 13-14, 16; Boroughs, 'John Woolman: Spirituality and Social Transformation', 145.

³²⁵ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 16.

³²⁶ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods, and New Directions in the Study of Modern History* (New York: Longman, 1984), 56.

between other people.³²⁷ Two of Woolman's ledgers,³²⁸ some accounts of his ministry during PYM sessions, petitions to PYM bodies and his leadership roles are also available.³²⁹ Woolman's ephemera include a statement against the use of silver vessels,³³⁰ notes he took on an Anthony Benezet essay,³³¹ an unsigned document dated 1756 and written in Woolman's handwriting³³² and an unfinished essay on perfection.³³³ The most substantial piece of writing to come under this heading is Woolman's *An Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends*, which was written in 1772 before he sailed to England. The *Epistle* was published as a tract the same year.³³⁴ The manuscript of the *Epistle* is held at the Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College,³³⁵ and is printed in Gummere's collection.³³⁶

³²⁷ Henry Cadbury's collection of letters concerning Woolman's 1772 journey in England is an especially helpful resource. However, most letters are not published, but many of them can be found in the Pemberton and Smith files at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and others in the Special Collections, Haverford College Library. Woolman did not save letters he received and so this resource is unavailable. Henry Cadbury, *John Woolman in England a Documentary Supplement* (London: Friends Historical Society, 1971).

³²⁸ Both of these ledgers are held at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. John Woolman, 'Ledger B', 1752-1767, Woolman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; John Woolman, 'John Woolman's 1769 Ledger', 1769, Woolman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

³²⁹ PYM minutes and those of its constituent bodies are held at Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College and Special Collections, Haverford College Library.

³³⁰ John Woolman, 'Statement on the Use of Silver Vessels', A.D.S. Laminated, n.d., Swarthmore College, Friends Historical Library.

³³¹ The manuscript of these notes is contained in Folio A at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. John Woolman, 'Notes and commentaries on A. Benezet's A Caution and Warning to Great Britain', in *John Woolman and the Affairs of Truth: The Journalist's Essays, Epistles, and Ephemera*, ed. James Proud (San Francisco, CA: Inner Light Books, 2010), 93-101; Woolman, 'Journal Folio A'.

³³² John Woolman, 'Document, unsigned, supposed to have been written by John Woolman', 1756, Haverford College Library, Special Collections.

³³³ The folder that contains the manuscript of this unfinished essay bears the title, "Examples of Perfection": Religious Writing Fragment'. Proud is correct in noting that the title is not written on the manuscript itself and so it is unknown what was Woolman's intended title. John Woolman, "Examples of Perfection": Religious Writing Fragment', n.d., Woolman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; John Woolman, 'untitled fragment on patience and on trusting in God', in *John Woolman and the Affairs of Truth: The Journalist's Essays, Epistles, and Ephemera*, ed. James Proud (San Francisco, CA: Inner Light Books, 2010), 102-104.

³³⁴ John Woolman, *An Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends* (Burlington, N.J.: Printed by Isaac Collins, 1772).

³³⁵ John Woolman, 'An Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends, 1772. Bound with "Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind...,"' 1772, Swarthmore College, Friends Historical Library.

³³⁶ John Woolman, 'An Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', in *The Journal and*

1.5.1 Micro-theology as a Method of Analysis

This analysis of Woolman's theology concentrates on the entire corpus of his writings, as well as, secondarily, the recollections of those who knew him and interpreted him for others through their writings.

Sandra and Robert Holton have advocated microhistory – an historical study that reduces the scale of observation to a single subject and its contexts – as a helpful method for studying particular persons in particular settings.³³⁷ My research observes Woolman theologically, focusing on his *Journal*, essays and letters to others, as well as some PYM records and first-hand accounts. I have termed this approach 'micro-theological'. That is, this research takes a micro-analytical approach to Woolman's theology by focusing on his writings and allowing theological themes, patterns and categories to arise out of the primary material, without imposing larger categories on the corpus. This micro-research, then, supplements and expands what can be deduced about the historical and theological context by applying pre-existing categories to Woolman's writing.

³³⁷ *Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Amelia M. Gummere (New York: Macmillan Company, 1922), 473–487.

Giovanni Levi argues that a reduction in the scale of historical observation can illuminate discrepancies between norms of various social expectations and individual reactions within a given environment. Understanding the complexity of contradiction and individuality within social structures frees the subject from 'an over-simple functionalism' towards an emphasis on 'the role of social contradiction in generating social change.' The Holtons argue that one of microhistory's most important contributions to historical study is the refusal to move too quickly from the 'particularities of the lives of individuals to the collective or aggregate level of social life', a habit among historians that inexorably undervalues the individual. The study of small community or atypical subjects, microhistorians advocate, is important for understanding society and a particular context because it addresses the extraordinary, which is often overlooked in large-scale studies. Sandra Holton and Robert Holton, 'From the particular to the global: Some Empirical, Epistemological and Methodological Aspects of Microhistory with Regard to a Women's Rights Network', in *Performing Global Networks*, ed. Karen Fricker and Ronit Lentin (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 10; Giovanni Levi, 'On Microhistory', in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke, 2nd ed. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 101; see also, Sigurdur Gylfi Magnusson, "The Singularization of History": Social History and Microhistory within the Postmodern State of Knowledge', *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 3 (2003): 709.

This is how the analysis was conducted: Woolman's writings were broken down by sentences, statements or paragraphs consistent with a complete thought and entered into the bibliographic and note-taking software, Zotero,³³⁸ as individual sub-entries under the 'parent item', that is, the item of Woolman's writing to which they belonged. Not every sentence was broken down in this way, as I sometimes summarised his thoughts and recorded the concept in a note, and some of his writings were not germane because they focused on practicalities, such as how many miles he rode on horseback that day. The notes were, then, each given thematic 'tags' and grouped together by tag in mind-mapping software to refine those tags into sub-headings and to identify nuances over larger sample sizes of similarly tagged material.³³⁹ Organising Woolman's writings

³³⁸ Zotero is an html based application that allows the researcher to cite, organise and collect material. It also backs up entries on a web-based server. All of my sources and notes were entered into Zotero and sorted and organised through its functionality. Zotero allows the creation of multiple 'libraries' that sources can be entered into for organisation. For example, I created a library entitled 'Woolman's writings' to house sources authored by Woolman and 'Colonial Quakerism' to house secondary sources on the colonial Quaker context. Zotero has several different search functions which enable sorting and finding keywords. For example, one could search for a keyword according to 'tags' and libraries, which enables very specific search results. In order to display the results of a search, or all the results for a specific tag, the researcher can 'generate a report' of the results, which would create a list of all the notes that resulted from that particular search. I found it helpful to give each of these notes an outline number that corresponded to the particular sub-heading under which the note fit. The 'report' would then be organised numerically so that all the results from a particular tag would also be organised according to that note's sub-heading. This process could be reproduced using index card files sorted by theme. See, www.zotero.org.

³³⁹ For example, in his essay 'On the Slave Trade' Woolman wrote that those who denied slaves the necessities of life were in reality working against God's impending reign: 'And how forcibly do these Things work against the Increase of the Government of the Prince of Peace!' I gave this sentence two thematic tags: 1) 'Woolman, essays, eschatology'; and, 2) 'Woolman, essays, sin'. It is possible to sort by multiple tags, so if I were to search for a statement in Woolman's essays about both eschatology and sin, this note would be among the results. There are many cases of overlap, where multiple theological themes - and thus multiple Zotero tags - could be applied to the same statement. In this particular case I decided that this was primarily a statement against sin, which is a moderately large thematic category based on the number of tags (sixty-seven tags across all of Woolman's writings). When I created a mind-map on Woolman's concept of 'sin', this particular sentence was one of eight notes that were sorted into the sub-heading of 'opposition to the true Spirit'. The notes organised under this heading described sin as a rebellion to God's reign, and, in essence, a denial of the truest reality as Woolman understood it. These sub-headings then became the outline for paragraphs and sub-sections within the text of this thesis. The notes organised under each sub-heading became the source material and content for the findings of their respective sections herein. In another example of my process, I identified the following statement from 'On Loving our Neighbors as Ourselves' as a coherent statement,

In the harmonious Spirit of Society, Christ is all in all.

in this way brought together theological themes from across the corpus of his writings and was, therefore, helpful in identifying how his theology worked together and which themes emerge as important when grouped thematically, but would otherwise be overlooked, if only encountered as embedded within a larger text. With these themes grouped together, I was able to make connections with other theological themes and analyse their prominence and contextual variations. Out of this process of analysis and refinement of Woolman's writing, the key elements of an apocalyptic theology emerged.

This approach is informed by microhistory in that it reduces the scale of observation to a single subject, and in that it understands that subject to be an atypical representative of the community.³⁴⁰ However, this research changes the focus to an exclusive and thematic examination of the content of Woolman's religious belief. Thus, whereas a microhistory would go into further detail to set the theology in its historical context, this research only brings in contextual information specifically identified by Woolman himself. In elevating the theological analysis above detailed contextual points,

Here it is that *Old Things are past away, all Things are new, all things are of God*; and the Desire for outward Riches is at at End...

Now this Matter hath deeply affected my Mind. The Lord, through merciful Chastisements, hath given me a Feeling of that Love, in which the Harmony of Society standeth, and a Sight of the Growth of that Seed which bringeth forth Wars and great Calamities in the World, and a Labour attends me to open it to others.

I gave this statement the tags: 1) 'Woolman, essays, eschatology'; 2) 'Woolman, essays, judgment'; 3) 'Woolman, essays, time'; 4) 'Woolman, essays, harmony'; and, 5) 'Woolman, essays, simplicity'. After going through all the source material, I determined the tags for 'time,' 'harmony' and 'simplicity' to be minor themes and better understood as subsidiary to larger categories. That left me with the determination of whether this statement was primarily about 'eschatology' or 'judgment'. In the end, eschatology and judgment are inter-related theological concepts and so I located a section on judgment in my chapter on eschatology (see section 4.3) and that is where the notes tagged with 'judgment' went. This particular note, though, I determined to represent particularly eschatological sentiments and grouped it in my mind-map for eschatology with the six other notes that represented Woolman's theology of a 'new nature/new state'. This note then became part of the evidence for Woolman's eschatology, specifically sub-section 4.1.3 of this thesis. John Woolman, 'On the Slave Trade', in *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Amelia M. Gummere (New York: Macmillan Company, 1922), 497; John Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', in *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Amelia M. Gummere (New York: Macmillan Company, 1922), 491-492; see 3.2.4 and 4.1.3, 4.3.

³⁴⁰ Levi, 'On Microhistory', 101.

yet keeping the historical moment firmly in view, the logic of the theology becomes more visible. Focusing this research on Woolman's apocalyptic theology, which is more particular than a biographical or historical approach, sheds light on the way Woolman constructed a theology which resonated with his ideals and concerns and motivated him to action. This micro-theological approach reveals previously unobserved principles in Woolman's religious belief.

Having laid out the sources and methodology for this research, in the next section, I situate my research within recent scholarship.

1.6 Literature Review

In this section, I describe recent secondary sources relevant to my research. There is a limited body of secondary sources available and no source with a theological focus.

Historian Geoffrey Plank's 2012 *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom: A Quaker in the British Empire*, is an essential resource for understanding Woolman's biography and community life. Rather than writing a chronological narrative, Plank organised his book into thematic chapters to emphasise 'Woolman's community life, the influences that worked on him, and the problems that animated him.'³⁴¹

One of Plank's chief aims is to demythologise Woolman, who has been described as a 'saint' and is noted by some as the most important of the early antislavery proponents. However, Plank suggests that such 'effusive praise' for Woolman has

³⁴¹ Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 4.

encouraged a view of Woolman as a solitary figure disconnected from the relationships 'which gave meaning and structure' to his reforms and the broader social currents of his day.³⁴² Plank accomplishes this task by weaving into his analysis the efforts of other Quaker reformers, as well as accounts of Woolman's activities from the perspective of those outside the Quaker fold, like Moravian missionary David Zeisberger's muted appraisal of Woolman's endeavours among Native Americans.³⁴³

Another important contribution is the way Plank frames Woolman's reforms around such concepts as empire, the kingdom of God and the millennium. This way of considering Woolman's diverse social and moral reforms gives structure to what would otherwise appear to be disparate ethical concerns. Contrary to Plank, this thesis argues that Woolman was neither a millenarian³⁴⁴ nor was he waiting for the millennium,³⁴⁵ but is best understood as an amillennialist, with a realising eschatology in which God's eternal will was immediately realisable, as Woolman said, 'on earth as it is done in heaven.'³⁴⁶ However, Plank's assessment of Woolman's motivation to 'establish that kingdom foreseen by the prophet Isaiah' is a crucial advancement in Woolman studies because it identifies a strong eschatological impetus and clearly names Woolman's vision as a religious one, consisting of a 'detailed and sweeping critique of the material culture and economy of the British Empire'.³⁴⁷ According to Plank, 'his ideas may have carried radical implications, but at heart, from his childhood forward, he was conservative. Woolman's vision of the ideal social order was modeled not only on Eden,

³⁴² Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 5.

³⁴³ Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 165–166.

³⁴⁴ Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 169, 213.

³⁴⁵ Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 11.

³⁴⁶ See 4.1.

³⁴⁷ Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 3.

but also on the way of life he knew as a boy on his father's farm.³⁴⁸

This religious vision, which was both eschatological and this-worldly, was an alternative ordering that rejected British imperial and economic policies. Thus, Plank rightly frames Woolman's concerns in terms of economics: 'Economics played a central role in Woolman's understanding of history and his sense of God's plans for the world',³⁴⁹ when he refers to how Woolman and other reformers attempted to integrate conviction and consumer practice through boycotts.³⁵⁰ In this way, Plank helps readers see cohesion in Woolman's reforms and concerns for living faithfully.

However, while Plank adequately situates Woolman within the important relationships which no doubt shaped his ideas and reforms, this raises the question as to whether other Quakers shared his religious vision of God's kingdom on earth, or whether, within the group of Quaker reformers, there were various theological motivations which led to common, outward expressions.³⁵¹ For example, both Anthony Benezet and Woolman were vigorous antislavery proponents critical of the slave-economy, but Benezet did not articulate his concern in the eschatological language Woolman did.³⁵²

Thomas Slaughter approaches Woolman with the 'critical empathy' of an historian in *The Beautiful Soul of John Woolman, Apostle of Abolition*.³⁵³ Slaughter uses a wide variety of sources, from manuscripts to Woolman's correspondence to detailed historical monographs, to analyse Woolman's complex personality. Slaughter situates

³⁴⁸ Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 32.

³⁴⁹ Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 82.

³⁵⁰ Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 152–153.

³⁵¹ See 5.2.

³⁵² See 5.2.

³⁵³ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 9.

Woolman in his historical context by researching the geography, horticultural practices and personalities of Woolman's neighbours. However, some of Slaughter's findings are more anecdotal than historical and some are in the way of speculation. At one point, Slaughter suggests that Woolman's vague criticisms of the 'wanton' company of his teen years was, in part, because certain of his assumed companions owned and read Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.³⁵⁴ There is no hint in Woolman's writings that such was the case.

In his attempt to get to the core of Woolman's personality and motivation, Slaughter appropriately discusses Woolman's sense of call to prophetic witness and the role of ascetic practices and mystical spirituality in the formation of Woolman's character. However, Slaughter does not clarify whether or not there are any unifying features in Woolman's spirituality, or whether Woolman's example is of a combination of divergent influences which resulted in the making of an American 'saint'.³⁵⁵

Recent scholarship has tended to address Woolman studies from an interdisciplinary approach. The collection of essays edited by Michael Heller in *The Tendering Presence: Essays on John Woolman* is a prime example of this formulation. As Heller states in the preface, these essays demonstrate 'our efforts to apply our best scholarship to a writer and thinker who forces us to question the limits of our disciplinary approaches'.³⁵⁶ The essays included in *The Tendering Presence* address Woolman's spiritual formation, use of language, relationship to minority populations, historical context, approach to pedagogy and other issues. While several of these

³⁵⁴ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 85. For a review of Slaughter's book see, Geoffrey Plank, 'The Beautiful Soul of John Woolman, Apostle of Abolition', *The Christian Century*, 125, no. 18 (2008): 40.

³⁵⁵ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 10.

³⁵⁶ Heller, *The Tendering Presence*, xi.

interdisciplinary essays touch on individual pieces of Woolman's theology,³⁵⁷ none constitutes a full length theological treatment of the entire body of Woolman's writing.

Philip Boroughs' dissertation, *John Woolman (1720-1772): Spirituality and Social Transformation in Colonial America*, highlights Woolman's spirituality. Using contemporary and classic definitions, Boroughs defines spirituality as 'the experience and the expression of the revelation of God in the Spirit of Jesus to which the believer lovingly responds in prayer and service as an individual, as a participant in a faith community, and as a member of the human family within creation.'³⁵⁸ Boroughs proceeds to lay this framework over the whole of Woolman's life, analysing the social, communal and individual aspects of his spirituality. In the process, Boroughs emphasises the inter-relatedness of these three aspects in Woolman's discernment of God's revealing voice. Boroughs argues that Woolman's main purpose in sharing his spiritual journey publicly was to encourage others to listen to the voice of God and share in the spiritual transformation that this relationship with God would afford.³⁵⁹

Boroughs classifies Woolman's theology in terms of the social dimensions of his spirituality.³⁶⁰ I argue that a better way to understand the integrated complexity of Woolman's theology is by analysing his life holistically, through which analysis an

³⁵⁷ See, for example, Michael L. Birkel, 'Preparing the Heart for Sympathy: John Woolman Reading Scripture', in *The Tendering Presence: Essays on John Woolman*, ed. Michael Heller (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill, 2003), 88-104; Michael Graves, "A Perfect Redemption from this Spirit of Oppression": John Woolman's Hopeful World View in "A Plea for the Poor", in *The Tendering Presence: Essays on John Woolman*, ed. Michael Heller (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 2003), 219 - 242; Philip Boroughs, 'John Woolman's Spirituality', in *The Tendering Presence: Essays on John Woolman*, ed. Michael Heller (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 2003), 1-16; Christopher Varga, "Be Ye Therefore Perfect": Integral Christianity in "Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes", in *The Tendering Presence: Essays on John Woolman*, ed. Michael Heller (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 2003), 207-218.

³⁵⁸ Boroughs, 'John Woolman: Spirituality and Social Transformation', 15-16.

³⁵⁹ Boroughs, 'John Woolman: Spirituality and Social Transformation', 276-277.

³⁶⁰ Boroughs, 'John Woolman: Spirituality and Social Transformation', 7.

apocalyptic theology, which made claims on worldly affairs, emerges. Segmenting Woolman's spiritual life into social, communal and individual dimensions overly simplifies a life which is marked by deep, powerful, inter-related convictions of God's activity within history and human responsibility.

Woolman's *Journal* is widely admired as a spiritual classic.³⁶¹ Marietta has examined Woolman's writings and records in order to complete a history of the PYM,³⁶² and Soderlund has looked to Woolman as part of a history of Quaker antislavery in the 18th century.³⁶³ However Woolman's writings have not been examined in terms of their theological contribution and neither has the existence of an apocalyptic theology been identified among 18th century Quakers. Therefore, this research on Woolman's apocalyptic theology represents an original way to consider Woolman and constitutes a new reading of 18th century British North American colonial mid-Atlantic Quakerism.

1.7 Woolman and Apocalypticism

This thesis was originally to be focused on how Woolman's antislavery position was motivated by his theology. However, as the micro-theological analysis of his works proceeded, a clear and definite apocalyptic theology emerged. The originality and complexity of this finding became the focus of this research because it required a full-length and sustained treatment. As a result, Woolman's apocalyptic theology itself became the central focus of this thesis.

In her dissertation, 'On Earth as it is in Heaven: Eighteenth Century Quakerism as Realized Eschatology', Damiano addresses what she claims to be the centrality of an

³⁶¹ Moulton, *Journal and Major Essays*, 3.

³⁶² Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*.

³⁶³ Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*.

eschatological theology in the formation and practice of Friends after the second generation of Quakerism.³⁶⁴ Damiano's analysis contrasts with Dandelion's and Nikki Coffey Tousley's contention that eschatology among Quakers disappeared after the 17th century.³⁶⁵

Damiano defines 'realized eschatology' as a belief among 18th century Friends that 'God's created order was to be manifest on earth now', not merely patiently waited for in a future life.³⁶⁶ Elsewhere in her thesis she explains:

underlying the realized eschatology of Eighteenth Century Quakerism is the sense and experience of a reality beyond that which is usually recognized. For Friends this reality was the experience of the accessibility of Christ's guidance in everyday life. If people listened to this guidance and put it into practice, Divine reality would be manifested on earth.³⁶⁷

This spirituality, centred around listening, waiting and following God's voice in purification and obedience, typified the Quietist period among Quakers, but, as Damiano notes, stretches much further into the history of Christian mysticism as the *via negativa*.³⁶⁸ The act of listening in itself, she argues, demonstrated an eschatological awareness of a transforming reality, which was separate from the common perception but that transformed the faithful into instruments of justice.³⁶⁹

Damiano expands analyses of 18th century Quakerism into a long overdue theological discussion.³⁷⁰ Along with Dandelion, I argue that Quaker eschatology is best described as a *realising* eschatology, as opposed to Damiano's *realized* eschatology.³⁷¹

³⁶⁴ Damiano, 'On Earth as it is in Heaven', 10.

³⁶⁵ Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 47; Nikki Coffey Tousley, 'The Experience of Regeneration and Erosion of Certainty in the Theology of Second-Generation Quakers: No Place for Doubt?' *Quaker Studies* 13, no. 1 (2008): 47.

³⁶⁶ Damiano, 'On Earth as it is in Heaven', 13.

³⁶⁷ Damiano, 'On Earth as it is in Heaven', 116.

³⁶⁸ Damiano, 'On Earth as it is in Heaven', 59.

³⁶⁹ Damiano, 'On Earth as it is in Heaven', 116.

³⁷⁰ Damiano, 'On Earth as it is in Heaven', 13.

³⁷¹ Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 31.

The active voice emphasises the Quaker understanding of the unfolding nature of eschatological reality, rather than a past tense experience. However, Damiano is right about the existence of an eschatological theology among 18th century Quakers, but is wrong to characterise it only in terms of listening to God's voice. As this thesis makes clear, Woolman's eschatology believed the eschaton was actively realising, impending, and had already begun.³⁷²

Dandelion and Damiano have noted the difficulty of studying 18th century Quakers and the under-representation this era receives in Quaker studies and colonial history,³⁷³ while Butler has argued that the middle colonies, from 1680-1770, have received little scholarly attention.³⁷⁴ An exploration of Woolman's understanding of God, the created world and his relationship to others is, I argue, an essential way to understand Woolman and deepens 18th century Quaker and mid-Atlantic scholarship.³⁷⁵

One reason why scholars have not identified the centrality of apocalyptic theology in Woolman's writing is that the disciplinary approaches commonly applied to the study of Woolman mitigate against this type of theological definition. For example, Plank³⁷⁶ has identified Woolman's claim that God's kingdom was to be established on earth and that this kingdom was a rejection of the 'material culture and economy of the British Empire'.³⁷⁷ However, Plank's historical approach is focused on weaving a coherent narrative of Woolman's life, rather than explicating theological themes and an

³⁷² See 4.1.

³⁷³ Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity', 95; Damiano, 'On Earth as it is in Heaven', 13.

³⁷⁴ Butler, *Becoming America*, 4.

³⁷⁵ Butler argues that scholars should 'attach less importance to Puritanism as the major force in shaping religion in America and more importance to the religious eclecticism that has long been prominent.' Jon Butler, *Awash in a Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 2.

³⁷⁶ See review in 1.6.

³⁷⁷ Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 3.

in-depth identification and analysis of theological terms across Woolman's writing. Heller's literary approach has identified a consistent pattern of rhetorical persuasion in Woolman's writings.³⁷⁸ While a method of discourse can help illuminate theological conviction, a literary approach is focused on the form of the writing, rather than any nuance of religious belief and theological coherence. Michael Birkel's devotional emphasis helps to interpret Woolman for contemporary modeling,³⁷⁹ but, in such an approach, Woolman is viewed in terms of his witness,³⁸⁰ rather than for scholarly analysis and the examination of complex theological themes.

Additionally, perhaps the most influential Quaker scholar of the early 20th century, Rufus Jones,³⁸¹ characterised Woolman as primarily a Quietist, a theological lens that can also be seen in Gummere's approach to Woolman.³⁸² Jones' distaste for 18th century Quakerism and his modernist optimism in the human capacity to enact redemption prejudiced his appraisal of Quaker history.³⁸³ Jones' analysis was hindered by the fact that the version of Woolman's *Journal* readily available at the time had edited out some apocalyptic passages and, so, Jones did not have the sources which might have influenced his interpretation.³⁸⁴ Damiano has already identified an eschatological theology in 18th century mid-Atlantic Quakerism,³⁸⁵ however, with such a wide focus and broad definition, her results are generalised, and so do not address

³⁷⁸ Heller, 'Soft Persuasion'.

³⁷⁹ Birkel states, 'In these chapters, I seek to write primarily as a teacher for general readers rather than as a specialist for other specialists...' Birkel, *Near Sympathy*, xii-xvii.

³⁸⁰ Birkel, *Near Sympathy*, xii-xvii.

³⁸¹ See 1.2.4 d).

³⁸² For example, Gummere contends that Woolman was 'saturated with the atmosphere and thought' of the continental Quietists and believes they influenced his writing. Gummere, *Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, 15; see also, Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 186.

³⁸³ Pryce, 'Negative to a Marked Degree', 530.

³⁸⁴ Jones, 'Quietism', 12, 12 fn. 11; Woolman, 'Journal', 160 fn. 6. See also, Woolman, 'Journal Folio A', 221.

³⁸⁵ See above.

divergent, atypical theologies of the era. A micro-theological approach,³⁸⁶ on the other hand, can explore outlier positions and the nuances in individual structurings of religious belief and definitions of terms and experiences.³⁸⁷

As such, this research makes advances in Woolman studies because it approaches the field with a micro-theological lens. It is through this lens that Woolman's social reforms and religious experience can be seen as part of an apocalyptic theology. When approaching Woolman in this way, for example, his eschatological language, such as the 'Government of Christ' and the 'kingdom of God',³⁸⁸ can be seen as broadly prominent in his writings. These two phrases, or derivatives of thereof, occur some 29 times in 10 different publications, which demonstrates how thoroughgoing these concepts are in Woolman's writings.³⁸⁹ Whereas Woolman's *Journal* is often given greatest emphasis in existing scholarship,³⁹⁰ the research presented here has identified

³⁸⁶ See 1.5.1.

³⁸⁷ For example, Damiano argues that, for 18th century Quakers, love and nurture of the spiritual community were the divinely appointed means for enacting redemption in the world. It is certainly true that community played an important function among Friends, yet Damiano's approach tends to diminish the urgency of Woolman's eschatology and the sometimes ecstatic and visionary way he received divine revelation on behalf of the world around him. In 5.2 this thesis demonstrates that Woolman's apocalypticism sets him apart from his reform-minded peers. Damiano, 'On Earth as it is in Heaven', 166-172. See also, 2.1.2, 4.1.3, 4.2.4 and 5.2.

³⁸⁸ Jon R. Kershner, "The Lamb's War" or "the Peaceable Government of Christ?" John Woolman and Quaker Apocalypses', (presented at the American Academy of Religion, San Francisco, 2011).

³⁸⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 48, 49, 154, 170-171 fn. 42, 172 fn. 46, 174, 176-177; John Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes; Recommended to the Professors of Christianity of Every Denomination', in *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Phillips P. Moulton (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1971), 208; Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 251, 259, 263; John Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom and Human Policy; on Labour; on Schools; and on the Right use of the Lord's Outward Gifts', in *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Amelia M. Gummere (New York: Macmillan Company, 1922), 394; John Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind and How it is to be Maintained', in *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Amelia M. Gummere (New York: Macmillan Company, 1922), 441, 450, 451, 453, 454, 455; Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 477, 484, 485, 487; Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 493; Woolman, 'On the Slave Trade', 497; John Woolman, 'The Epistle of 1764 from PYM to London Yearly Meeting', in *John Woolman and the Affairs of Truth: The Journalist's Essays, Epistles, and Ephemera*, ed. James Proud (San Francisco, CA: Inner Light Books, 2010), 265; John Woolman, 'The Epistle of 1768 from PYM to London Yearly Meeting', in *John Woolman and the Affairs of Truth: The Journalist's Essays, Epistles, and Ephemera*, ed. James Proud (San Francisco, CA: Inner Light Books, 2010), 267.

³⁹⁰ As the framework for an historical narrative or as a spiritual classic, the *Journal* is an apt way to

elements of apocalypticism across the range of his corpus and, therefore, this apocalypticism can be seen as essential to Woolman's theology. There are certainly concentrations of apocalypticism in Woolman's writings, but even these two exemplary phrases highlight the breadth of the use of these ideas by Woolman. Further, when the focus of analysis is placed on theological concepts and not specific phrases, the frequency of apocalyptic content increases dramatically.

For example, the three themes of revelation, propheticism and eschatology, identified as the core headings under which Woolman's apocalypticism is examined here,³⁹¹ arose from a thematic, micro-analysis of Woolman's writings and not from generalised sociological, historical or literary analysis.³⁹² While these three themes are interdependent and are present in every section of this thesis, they emphasise different aspects of Woolman's apocalypticism. Revelation refers to the divine disclosure of transcendent truths to a human recipient. This revelation is consequential for the world of human affairs. Propheticism emphasises the way the divine revelation makes claims on societal organisation and commissions the recipient of revelation to proclaim the content of that revelation and enact divine purposes in opposition to apostate forms and practices. Eschatology refers to the new world God is bringing about, the judgment that must befall the apostate world and the belief that the recipient of divine revelation functions as a harbinger of the age to come. All the essays, the *Journal*, many letters and ephemera mentioned in 1.5 are utilised under one or more of these themes in the chapters that follow.

approach Woolman, but only provides a partial view of his theology. Birkel, *Near Sympathy*; Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*; Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*.

³⁹¹ See 1.4.

³⁹² See 1.5.1.

Conversely, the analysis that Woolman's theology is essentially apocalyptic tends to diminish the impact of Enlightenment influences on Woolman's thought. 18th century Quakers as a group did not escape the philosophical winds of the Enlightenment, though, May argues, they were never 'primarily dependent on the natural-religion argument'.³⁹³ Contemporary scholarship is divided over Woolman's place in these trends and his own language is hard to categorise definitively. Altman maintains that Woolman 'remained a primitive Quaker' and largely ignored Deism and the philosophy of the religious enlightenment.³⁹⁴ Slaughter and Frost disagree and suggest that Woolman's antislavery essays demonstrate an 'abstract quality'³⁹⁵ that coincides with the 'tone of rational rather than mystical religion'.³⁹⁶ Wills adds that Woolman's stance against slavery and the abuse of Native Americans was an Enlightenment position.³⁹⁷ Frost points out that Woolman's relationship to natural religion was ambiguous because he both critiqued 'natural affection' and used 'nature' in positive ways and saw 'nature' as inherent to human beings.³⁹⁸

Frost's essay, 'John Woolman and the Enlightenment', illustrates the ambiguity of the evidence.³⁹⁹ For example, he notes that Woolman's *Journal* 'rarely' uses the language of rational religion.⁴⁰⁰ A 1757 example of Enlightenment language in the *Journal* is a conversation with a slave-owner in which Woolman claimed that 'liberty was the natural right of all men equally'.⁴⁰¹ This particular argument appears grounded in the idea of

³⁹³ Henry Farnham May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 18.

³⁹⁴ Walter Altman, 'John Woolman's Reading' (Ph. D. Dissertation, Florida State University, 1957), 33; Altman's analysis is addressed in chapter 5.

³⁹⁵ Frost, 'John Woolman and the Enlightenment', 180; Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 132.

³⁹⁶ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 132; see also, Frost, 'John Woolman and the Enlightenment', 180.

³⁹⁷ Wills, *Head and Heart*, 141–142.

³⁹⁸ Frost, 'John Woolman and the Enlightenment', 181.

³⁹⁹ Frost, 'John Woolman and the Enlightenment', 186.

⁴⁰⁰ Frost, 'John Woolman and the Enlightenment', 169.

⁴⁰¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 61.

natural rights, which, Woolman suggests, should be applied equally to slaves.⁴⁰²

However, it is important to note that this rare statement on natural rights in the *Journal* takes place in the context of an antislavery conversation.⁴⁰³

In the example from *Considerations on Keeping Negroes*, below, Woolman employed Enlightenment language to dispute the contention of some pro-slavery advocates that African slavery was justified because Africans were, supposedly, descended from Ham.⁴⁰⁴

To suppose it right that an innocent man shall at this day be excluded from the common rules of justice, be deprived of that liberty which is the natural right of human creatures, and be a slave to others during life on account of a sin committed by his immediate parents or a sin committed by Ham, the son of Noah, is a supposition too gross to be admitted into the mind of any person who sincerely desires to be governed by solid principles.⁴⁰⁵

Here, Woolman appealed to the influence of 'common rules of justice', 'liberty' and 'natural right' for any who would seek to be 'governed by solid principles'.⁴⁰⁶ This language in his antislavery essays justifies Frost's conclusion that Woolman broadened his appeal on this issue 'to include reason, natural law, and innate liberty'.⁴⁰⁷ Frost concludes his analysis, thus:

those readers who have found enlightenment themes in Woolman rely on the antislavery essays and others who downplay rational religion's significance emphasize the *Journal*. So in a sense, both interpretations are right and considering them together makes Woolman an even more fascinating writer, aware of the power and wary of the seductiveness of

⁴⁰² Woolman, 'Journal', 61.

⁴⁰³ Woolman, 'Journal', 61.

⁴⁰⁴ In Genesis 9:25, Noah cursed his son, Ham, for dishonouring him: 'Cursed be Canaan [Ham]! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers.' John Woolman, 'Considerations on Keeping Negroes, Part Second', in *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Phillips P. Moulton (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1971), 214.

⁴⁰⁵ Woolman, 'Considerations on Keeping Negroes, Part Second', 214.

⁴⁰⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on Keeping Negroes, Part Second', 214.

⁴⁰⁷ Frost, 'John Woolman and the Enlightenment', 186.

enlightenment Christianity.⁴⁰⁸

This ambiguity makes it difficult to judge how central Enlightenment rationalism was to Woolman's theology. This point becomes even more pronounced when considering that Woolman's non-antislavery essays do not feature Enlightenment language prominently.

It is probably no coincidence that the concentration of Enlightenment arguments in Woolman's writings is focused on antislavery, as in the example from Woolman's *Journal* above, and in his antislavery essays. One explanation for this is that Woolman borrowed from fellow antislavery PYM Quaker, Anthony Benezet in his antislavery discussions,⁴⁰⁹ so perhaps Benezet's combination of Enlightenment and spiritual objections to slavery⁴¹⁰ shaped Woolman's decision to employ that language tactically. If such is the case, it should not be viewed as an inconsistency in Woolman's approach because persuading others to live according to the theogico-social vision he advocated was primary, not the means one took to get there.⁴¹¹ However, Woolman's tactical use of Enlightenment language suggests he was aware of prevailing intellectual trends, but decided whether to use them or not depending on his subject matter. In light of the isolated usage of Enlightenment language, this trope appears to be an aberration rather than a thoroughgoing and overarching theme in his theology. Conversely, the identification of Woolman's theology as apocalyptic is consistent throughout his works.

The use of micro-theology in itself provides a much needed and original contribution to Woolman studies. The application of an apocalyptic theological lens,

⁴⁰⁸ Frost, 'John Woolman and the Enlightenment', 186.

⁴⁰⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 157; Woolman, 'Considerations on Keeping Negroes, Part Second', 230–231; Irv Brendlinger, *To Be Silent... Would Be Criminal: The Antislavery Influence and Writings of Anthony Benezet* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 30.

⁴¹⁰ Maurice Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard: Anthony Benezet, Father of Atlantic Abolitionism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 32.

⁴¹¹ See 2.2.2 and 3.2.

which arises out of the micro-theological analysis, to Woolman's corpus constitutes an original contribution to Quaker studies and 18th century colonial religious history. Thus, apocalyptic became the focus of this thesis with each of the main chapters concentrating on the three main aspects of Woolman's apocalyptic theology: revelation, prophecy and eschatology.

1.8 Thesis Outline

Chapter 2 details Woolman's theology of revelation. I argue that Woolman understood God to speak immediately and directly into people's lives. This revelation occurred as Woolman 'resigned' himself to the divine decree and so became integrated into divine purposes.

Chapter 3 describes Woolman's propheticism, which demonstrates the way he understood divine revelation as making claims on human affairs while subverting the *status quo*. Here, I demonstrate that Woolman felt commissioned to disclose the divine revelation to others.

In chapter 4, I argue that Woolman demonstrated an amillennial, realising eschatology which anticipated the restoration of divine intentions on earth. Woolman believed that he stood proleptically between the ages in a state of perfection, such that the eschaton was a present reality for the true Church.

In chapter 5, I explore Woolman's reading of devotional and early Quaker sources for potential influences on his theology, and argue that Woolman resonated with some of the content, but appropriated it in his own way. I then compare Woolman to prominent reform-minded Friends and contend that Woolman's views had a more

thoroughgoing apocalyptic coherence than did his peers, but there was enough commonality amongst them that his views would have found acceptance. Finally, I analyse Woolman from the perspective of systematic theology, where I show that he was not systematic, but a constructive theologian in the spiritualist tradition.

I conclude my research in chapter 6, outline its original contribution and the consequences of my research for existing scholarship and suggest further research originating out of my thesis.

1.9 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have situated Woolman within the context of Quaker beginnings, his 18th century context, including the reform movement of which he was part, and the cultural forces that shaped his environment. A biography of Woolman's life followed these contextual sections. I, then, defined my apocalyptic and theological lens, discussed sources and method, situated this research within existing Woolman scholarship and justified the apocalyptic lens.

CHAPTER TWO

THE 'PRINCIPLE THAT PROCEEDS FROM GOD': REVELATION AND JOHN WOOLMAN'S THEOLOGICO-SOCIAL VISION

This chapter looks specifically at the manner in which Woolman believed God's purposes were made known and disseminated to a human recipient, his theology of revelation.

Woolman believed his view of the world, divine Truth and social destiny to be the result of his spiritual proximity to a transcendent God who communicated with him and desired to communicate with others. Therefore, as Karl Barth (1886-1968) argued, 'theology must *always* simply "begin at the beginning", which means that all true knowledge of God lives by the beginning that God makes with us, not that we make with God.'¹ This chapter explores how Woolman came to believe what he did about God and God's will for the world. In other words, this chapter is about revelation, which simply means that Woolman felt his beliefs and actions to be shaped and guided by divine disclosure of transcendent and eternal purposes.² These disclosures occurred sometimes in ecstatic ways and sometimes in very natural ways,³ but Woolman read

¹ Eberhard Busch, *The Great Passion: An Introduction to Karl Barth's Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2004), 63.

² See 1.4.

³ For example, Woolman discerned divine revelation in dreams and visions (see 2.1.2, 4.1.1 and 4.1.3), as well as lessons from the natural world: Woolman reported that, as a child, he had killed young robins, whose mother he found dead. Afterward, he felt remorse 'and believed in this case that Scripture [sic] proverb was fulfilled, "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel" [Prov. 12:10]...Thus he whose tender mercies are over all his works hath placed a principle in the human mind which incites to exercise goodness toward every living creature...' Here, Woolman believed God used the natural world to reveal transcendent, divine truths. Woolman, 'Journal', 24-25.

God's voice and teaching into them all. The central component of Woolman's apocalyptic theology, explored in this chapter, is his belief that God revealed eternal Truths to him.

For Woolman, revelation and mysticism were inter-related. As described below,⁴ Woolman's theological belief demonstrated itself and grew out of a mystical revelation in a reinforcing, iterative process. By mystical, I mean that Woolman believed himself to be united to God's will and capable of knowing and doing what God prescribed moment by moment. However, it is important to reclaim 'mysticism' from the ethereal, 'romantic and reactionary view of mysticism in which mystics are seen to stand aloof from and independent of the religious tradition...[which] slight[s] the genuine eminence of mystics *within* their traditions.'⁵

I am arguing that Woolman's experience of God and society consisted of the revelations of a transcendent God which required obedience in the physical world.⁶ Woolman's apocalyptic theology relied on the divine act of uncovering truths, hidden to

⁴ See 2.1.

⁵ The definition of mysticism being used in this thesis, a sense of union with God, follows Bernard McGinn's definition of 'mystical consciousness' as the inward realisation of spiritual beliefs and practices 'through a transforming consciousness of God's immediate presence.' This awareness is a 'personal appropriation, but not an individualistic one, because it is rooted in the life of the Christian community and the grace mediated through that community and its sacraments and rituals.' I would add to McGinn's definition that, for Woolman, mysticism was a union with the divine revelation that entailed a new, redeemed social order under Christ's direct governance, an order that would be worked out within history through prophetic enactments.

What is here argued is that definitions of mysticism that assume an individualistic religious practice that remains confined in the ethereal are inadequate. As Robert Gimello argues, 'mysticism is inextricably bound up with, dependent upon, and usually subservient to the deeper beliefs and values of the traditions, cultures, and historical milieu which harbour it.' Gimello contends that modernist definitions of mystics as a 'universal religious elite' have impeded attempts to adequately define mysticism and understand its variety and contexts. Bernard McGinn, 'Mystical Consciousness: A Modest Proposal', *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 8, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 44; Robert Gimello, 'Mysticism in Its Contexts', in *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, ed. Steven Katz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 63, en. 1, 86; cf. chapters 3 and 4 and especially 4.2.

⁶ See for example: Woolman, 'Journal', 46-47.

the natural eye, to reveal an alternative order consistent with divine purposes.⁷

2.1 The Mystical Connection to God

Woolman believed that God's intention for human behaviour was knowable because God had 'placed a principle in the human mind' which disclosed God's will and, if obeyed, ushered individuals and society as a whole towards greater degrees of faithfulness.⁸ Elsewhere, Woolman expanded on the idea of the imparted revelatory presence of God's self within the individual: 'There is a principle which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath had different names. It is, however, pure and proceeds from God.'⁹ Woolman did not clarify whether this 'principle' was a synonym for the Holy Spirit, or the indwelling Christ, but it is clear that he felt there was a connection-point imparted to humanity which could guide human actions and restructure societal organisation.¹⁰

Woolman believed he operated in a state of consistency with divine revelation and advocated that others come to know that God's 'internal presence on our minds is a delight of all others the most pure, and that the honest-hearted not only delight in this but in the effect of it upon them.'¹¹ This connection to God's will is best described as mystical. For Woolman, mysticism and apocalypticism go hand-in-glove. Woolman's direct, immediate state within the divine will was a mystical union with God's revelation that transformed the individual and, eventually, society into embodiments of God's

⁷ See 2.2.

⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 25.

⁹ Woolman, 'Considerations on Keeping Negroes; Recommended to the Professors of Christianity of Every Denomination; Part Second', in *The Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Phillips P. Moulton. (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1971), 236.

¹⁰ See 2.2.

¹¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 107.

ultimate will unfolding on earth.¹² Woolman believed the effect of the guiding divine 'principle' was a transformed state *in which* he dwelled and *out of which* he acted. In this way, the inward revelations of Christ were supernatural messages mediated by an otherworldly being, which directed the course of Woolman's life and made claims on the world.¹³

When considering Woolman's mystical attachment to the divine 'principle', I am emphasising 'the *entire process* of human intentionality and self-presence, rather than just an originating pure feeling, sensation or experience easily separable from subsequent acts of thinking, loving and deciding.'¹⁴ McGinn's analysis is helpful for understanding Woolman's apocalyptic theology because it makes sense of the way Woolman understood divine revelation as making claims upon social structures that transformed the nature of human existence according to God's redemptive nature.¹⁵ The divine claim over human affairs infused human action with divine intentions, a 'meta-consciousness' that established God's will through historical and temporal events.¹⁶ McGinn argues that:

meta-consciousness is the co-presence of God in our inner acts, not as an object to be understood or grasped, but as the transforming Other...In other words, in mystical consciousness God is present not as an object, but as a goal that is both transcendent and yet immanent. He (She) is active in the human agent as the source, or co-author, of our acts of experiencing (that is, the reception of inner and outer data), knowing, and loving.¹⁷

¹² To put this in the words of Fox, Woolman believed that 'there was an anointing within man to teach him, and that the Lord would teach His people Himself.' Fox, *Journal*, 8.

¹³ Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', 9.

¹⁴ McGinn, 'Mystical Consciousness', 46.

¹⁵ McGinn, 'Mystical Consciousness', 47.

¹⁶ McGinn, 'Mystical Consciousness', 47.

¹⁷ McGinn, 'Mystical Consciousness', 47.

The real, immediate presence of God as 'source' and 'co-author' meant, to Woolman, that, through his union with divine revelation, God intervened in world affairs to transform the human condition within history. The relationship between revelation and eschatology is here clarified because 'the infinite horizon of all knowing and loving somehow becomes really "here" in a new form of awareness in what mystics call the ground, apex, or center of the soul.'¹⁸ In this way, the indwelling presence of Christ was an apocalyptic act which uncovered ultimate meaning and brought eternal purposes to bear on present historical situations.

The following sub-sections argue that Woolman believed God's revelation could be known and obeyed by humanity and through that revelation God was immediately present to govern the world. Firstly, in 2.1, I argue that the process of knowing the divine will was simultaneously a process *and* an event of union with God's revelation in a way that actualised God's will within historical occurrence. Secondly, in 2.2, I describe the theologically-social vision Woolman thought God had revealed to him, a vision to be implemented on earth that claimed the direct governance of Christ over human affairs and, thus, was thoroughly apocalyptic. Woolman desired to communicate God's direct revelation to others because he understood God to be the ultimate ruler of all human and social endeavour, even if human apostasy rejected this authority in the short-term.¹⁹ Revelation, then, was the foundation on which the transformed society would be built.

2.1.1 Epistemology: 'Resignation', Discernment and Submission

¹⁸ McGinn, 'Mystical Consciousness', 47.

¹⁹ See 3.2.4 and 4.3.

This section examines how Woolman came to know the divine revelation, how he thought God's voice was directly transmitted to human recipients. Woolman's epistemology is framed in terms of a) a 'resignation', or surrender, to God's purposes; however, Woolman's epistemology of divine revelation was also active, and realised through b) participation in God's will and, c) experience, which can only be verified by the faithful. These dimensions of Woolman's epistemology of revelation are addressed in turn below.

a) 'Resignation'

Woolman believed that, in order to know God's will, he must be willing to receive it.²⁰ For example, while he traveled in the South as an itinerant minister, in 1757, Woolman attended a meeting for worship and 'sat a considerable time in much weakness. Then I felt Truth open the way to speak a little in much plainness and simplicity, till at length through the increase of divine love amongst us we had a seasoning opportunity.'²¹ This occasion is almost formulaic in Woolman's account of vocal ministry arising from revelation. For Woolman, divine revelation was discernible when the human was prepared in 'weakness' to trust God's leadership, so that God's revelatory activity became present through human obedience, in this case vocal ministry. Woolman placed himself at the crux of God's activity in the meeting, labeling his perception of what to speak as the work of 'Truth', while that action itself was motivated by 'divine love'.²² However, Woolman felt this action was initiated and discernible through 'weakness' to human endeavour.²³ Likewise, Woolman would often

²⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 71.

²¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 71.

²² Woolman, 'Journal', 71.

²³ Woolman, 'Journal', 71.

begin a ministry journey with a 'drawing in my mind'.²⁴ The passive 'drawing', which originated action, resulted from a sense of connectivity to God's revealed will, where Woolman believed his will was wed to the divine will.²⁵

Perhaps the most pervasive and thoroughgoing concept in Woolman's epistemology is that of an active 'resignation'²⁶ to God's will as the means for union with God. Woolman also used similar, seemingly passive concepts to 'resignation', such as 'death' to one's will and 'submission'.²⁷ It is clear Woolman felt most confident that his actions were in line with God's will when they originated out of a deliberate interiority in which the fallen, prideful will surrendered to the divine will.²⁸ For instance, on a 1772 voyage across the Atlantic to England, Woolman described a mystical experience

²⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 90.

²⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 71.

²⁶ The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'resignation' as 'the action or fact of giving oneself up to God, providence, etc.' This usage derives from Thomas á Kempis' 15th century work, *The Imitation of Christ*, which Woolman owned. 'resignation, n.'. OED Online. September 2012. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.spl.org:2048/view/Entry/163604?redirectedFrom=resignation&> (accessed November 08, 2012); Woolman, 'Journal', 125; Woolman, 'Ledger B'. See discussion of Woolman's reading of á Kempis and Jakob Boehme in 5.1.2. Woolman's concept of 'resignation' could have been informed by either of them as they both understood 'resignation' to be central to the self's transformation to a state of union with God.

²⁷ Boroughs, 'John Woolman: Spirituality and Social Transformation,' 220.

²⁸ Woolman believed that human beings must be transformed out of a state of sin and into one as a new creation in God. Using the analogy of the camel going through the eye of the needle, Woolman suggested that a camel can, with great labour and time, be ground into such a composition that it could be poured through a hole the size of a needle's eye (Mt. 19:24, Mk. 10:25, Lk. 18:25). Addressing this analogy to humans, Woolman said, 'so man must cease from that spirit which craves riches, and be reduced into another disposition, before he inherits the Kingdom, as effectually as a camel must cease from the form of a camel in passing through the eye of a needle.' The natural properties of the sinful human must be altered in order to please God, suggesting a state of depravity and separation from God until that change took place. The responsibility for initiating this transformation was with the human agent ('man must cease from that spirit which craves riches'), but in the very activity of 'ceasing' becomes a participant in the transformation God facilitated ('be reduced into another disposition'). This change of states is prerequisite because 'a man who trusteth in riches and holds them for the sake of the power and distinction attending them cannot in that spirit enter the kingdom.' Here, the death of the self trapped in greed led to a this-worldly resurrection into a transformed self in God's kingdom. This transformation describes how Woolman believed the person in a state of rebellion to God could change into a person who relinquished wealth and power over others and so lived united to God's will. In Woolman's analogy, the individual who underwent this transformation did not cease to be human, but ceased to be controlled by sin and so able to act with universal goodness towards others and able to know and embody God's kingdom. Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 250-251; cf. 4.2.

in his *Journal*: 'My mind through the merciful help of the Lord hath been preserved in a good degree watchful and inward, and have this day great cause to be thankful in that I remain to feel quietness of mind.'²⁹ This mystical experience is followed immediately by a social pronouncement on the transatlantic sailing industry³⁰ and evangelistic efforts among the sailors.³¹

In this case, mystical experience, and even the introspective language of 'watchful and inward', expressed participation in the life of God revealing God's kingdom in human relationships and national economies. Here, again, Woolman described the 'mind' as the locus of human will and, thus, the locus of transformation.³² The 'watchful and inward' condition of Woolman's mind resulted in a state of 'quietness of mind'.³³ Woolman described his spiritual journey in passive and introspective language, which might appear to diminish his role in the historical process, and yet his introspection and 'resignation' led him to specific actions consistent with his interpretation of God's will.

I maintain that Woolman believed that 'resignation' to the divine will was the means through which humanity could hear and obey God's purposes. In this way, 'resignation' is to be understood not as the 'annihilation of self',³⁴ but as an epistemology

²⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 166.

³⁰ For a wonderful treatment of this topic, see, Plank, 'Sailing with John Woolman', 46-81.

³¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 166.

³² Woolman, 'Journal', 166.

³³ Woolman, 'Journal', 166.

³⁴ Woolman never used the phrase 'annihilation of self', but Jones argued Woolman manifested a desire for self-annihilation. Jones contended that the Quietist was suspicious of human abilities and believed that human capacity must be destroyed 'and all the faculties of the mind and heart are to be annihilated, that means that *this* world has no mission in our spiritual training, and that no processes which expand our capacities of judgment, and which discipline our will, and which fashion our character are of any value.' Elsewhere, he argued that Quietism was born out of a deep 'despair of human nature...' In this perspective, a theology of depravity hangs over all of humanity and human efforts are sullied by the creature and human nature. 'Nothing divine, nothing that has religious value, can originate in man as man.' The goal of the Quietist, then, was 'annihilation of the self, the

for the transformation of self into consistency with the realisation of God's intentions for the world. Thus, 'resignation' is an apocalyptic concept out of which Woolman believed himself to be part of the establishment of God's will on earth.

If there is a tension between Woolman's inward mystical attention, on the one hand, and outward prophetic embodiment, on the other, or between a quiet soul, on the

substitution of divine action for action directed by human will.' Dandelion follows this interpretation, arguing that Quietist Friends, such as Woolman, felt the 'path to God is based in retreat from the world and the self...Thus even the Quaker self was to be mistrusted as it was beset by human emotions and motives.'

By way of contrast, in a comparison of the spiritual autobiographies of Jonathan Edwards and John Woolman, G. Thomas Couser maintains that while Edwards desired self-annihilation as the means for intimacy with God, Woolman's path to faithfulness included joining with the human community universally and not an annihilation of self. Couser argues that for Edwards:

the convert's "new sense" was primarily a feeling about God and not himself; insofar as conversion did involve a new sense of self, it was a paradoxical one which made for an unstable emotional life. For, even if the self could be completed and perfected in God, it was still in itself corrupt and worthless. The wish to be "Swallowed up in God" and increasingly "conformed to the image of Christ", invoked the obverse side of Calvinist self-consciousness - the need to be "emptied and annihilated." Paradoxically, self-transcendence required self-abasement, and self-fulfillment meant self-annihilation. Growth in grace involved a progressive loss of the sense of one's self as an individual personality bound by human institutions; contemplating the divine glory alternated with contemplating the worthless self one could not wholly transcend. Edwards consciously dramatised the strain of being pulled by opposing emotional forces, but he understood his condition to be paradoxical rather than contradictory. By organising his narrative as a gradual progression towards complete sanctification, he pointed to the eventual resolution of the paradoxes, one which could occur only after death and hence lay beyond the scope of autobiography.

On the other hand, Couser argues that Woolman desired to merge with the human community and submit to God, which,

point[s] to a distinction between the mysticism of Woolman and that of Edwards... Both men were true mystics and both autobiographies focused on growth in grace through mystical experiences... But Edwards defined growth in grace as a progressive annihilation and fulfillment of the self in an exclusive intimacy with God, whereas Woolman's submission to God was achieved by means of the extension of his human sympathies. This growth in grace was evident in his progress from childhood sin through a solitary conversion to an expansive concern with all mankind. It was also evident in a vision Woolman had, late in life, during a severe attack of pleurisy.

In the vision to which Couser refers, explored in 4.1.3, Woolman hears the words, 'John Woolman is dead' and experiences himself merged with the sufferings of humanity. The words 'John Woolman is dead', he believed, referred to the death of his own will and signified a resurrection with Christ as a new creation.

But unlike Edwards, who perceived his resignation to God's will and his death in terms of a mystical merging with God, Woolman saw his loss of individual identity in terms of a merging with all of mankind as well as with God. Edwards' mysticism reflects the tendency of Puritan piety to conceive of the individual ultimately in terms of an exclusive relationship with God, while Woolman's mysticism reflects Quakerism's universalism.

Like Edwards' *Personal Narrative*, Woolman's *Journal* suggests the nature of the

one hand, and apocalyptic transformation, on the other, he does not dwell on it.

Woolman described 'resignation' both as a gradual process of submission to the divine will, especially as a young adult,³⁵ and as an established fact with key turning points.

For example, at the beginning of the 1758 PYM sessions, Woolman described a feeling of faltering followed by prophetic conviction *in 'resignation'*:

under a sense of my own infirmities and the great danger I felt of turning aside from perfect purity, my mind was often drawn to retire alone and put up my prayers to the Lord that he would be graciously pleased to strengthen me, that setting aside all views of self-interest and the friendship of this world, I might stand fully resigned to his holy will.³⁶

eventual resolution of the paradoxes of piety, while recognising that the actual resolution lies beyond death and, hence, beyond autobiography. Yet for Woolman, one of the paradoxes concerned the relationship of the individual to the community.

This thesis demonstrates that Woolman experienced transformation to the end that he was redeemed from sin to live and act according to the theogico-social vision God had revealed to him. He experienced the death of sin and the resurrection of a new self capable of judging the fallenness of contemporary society and acting in a way consistent with its redemption. Woolman did not seek the annihilation of self in the same sense as Edwards, or of an abdication of individuality, responsibility and agency. Rather, he understood the person to be most at liberty when freed from the corruptions of sin and united with God and pursuing the redemption of the world.

We see this theogico-social vision of 'resignation' to God and passion for humanity demonstrated in Woolman's 1772 voyage by ship to England. On the passage, he was appalled by the poor condition and corruption he saw among the sailors and the boys who were learning the sailing trade:

Oh, that all may take heed and beware of covetousness! Oh, that all may learn of Christ who is meek and low of heart! Then in faithfully following him, he will teach us to be content with food and raiment without respect to the customs or honours of this world. Men thus redeemed will feel a tender concern for their fellow creatures and a desire that those in the lowest stations may be encouraged. And where owners of ships attain to the perfect law of liberty and are doers of the word [James 1:25], these will be blessed in their deeds.

True 'liberty' came only as the transformed individual extended love to 'fellow creatures' and existed in a state of actively doing God's will. Even as Woolman rejected what he considered the sinful 'customs or honours of this world', he did so in engagement and extension of self with the world around him. The fallen, sinfulness of 'this world' did not entail a retreat from 'the world', nor did he give 'the world' up to the futility and oppression of sin. Instead, he advocated the redemption and transformation of humanity and the recreation of 'the world' through specific acts of human decision and agency, such as compassionate standards for sailing ships. Only in this state, united with God and loving to neighbours, were even the wealthiest of merchants able to 'attain to the perfect law of liberty'.

Jones, *Later Periods of Quakerism*, 75; Rufus Jones, 'Quietism', *The Harvard Theological Review* 10, no. 1 (1917): 3, 8, 12 fn. 11; Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 59; G. Thomas Couser, *American Autobiography: The Prophetic Mode* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979), 25-26, 39-40; Woolman, 'Journal', 186, 167; see 3.2.2, 3.2.4, 4.1, 4.2, 6.3.

³⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 28.

³⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 91-92.

The likelihood that slavery would come before the gathered Quaker body, and the controversy it entailed, caused Woolman to fear that he would not be faithful to divine revelation. At this key point, Woolman received strength and certainty from submission to God and was then made to be a participant in, what he understood to be, the divine will enacted in society.³⁷ Rather than shrinking from his calling, it was precisely through a state of 'resignation' that Woolman acted boldly and decisively.³⁸

Woolman believed 'resignation' was a state of 'entire trust in God'.³⁹ A state that, while once and for all established 'under the cross',⁴⁰ still required constant attention or else backsliding was possible.⁴¹ Woolman understood the state of 'resignation' in which the human being actively willed the divine will and 'live[d] in the spirit of Truth and utter[ed] that to the people which Truth opened in us' to be God's intention for world affairs, a continual state of full 'resignation' in which God and humans acted as one.⁴²

Yet, here there is an inconsistency in Woolman's view of God's grace. At one moment, Woolman said that, through a 'humble resignation', he was 'united to [God]' and 'utter[ed] words from an inward knowledge that they arise from the heavenly spring', while, at the next moment, the 'way may be difficult and require close attention to keep in it'.⁴³ For Woolman, there was, in the divine-human encounter, God's establishment of a new reality, on the one hand, and human response enabled by the

³⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 92-93. For another example of struggle leading to 'resignation' which resulted in social witness, see, Woolman, 'Journal', 119.

³⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 91-92.

³⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 49.

⁴⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 28.

⁴¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 155.

⁴² Woolman, 'Journal', 42.

⁴³ Woolman, 'Journal', 72.

'strength of divine love', on the other.⁴⁴ The state of 'resignation' in the stream of God's purpose for the world, Woolman believed, was, both here and not yet here, realised and realising, already open and still unfolding.⁴⁵ It was inaugurated and maintained by God without any deficiency, Woolman believed, yet, at the same time, it was incarnated in the human response and attention to the inward 'principle'.

Pryce provides fresh scholarship on the philosophical and theological elements of what she calls 'quietistic Quakerism',⁴⁶ which reinforces this interpretation. Pryce argues that 17th century theological conceptualisations of the self 'did not necessarily comprise a self-perception that was uniformly held in mistrust...or suspicion...per se, but more of a self which was considered vulnerable to being deceived into false conceptualisations and therefore must be alert to, and faithful to, its true ground of being, which was in God.'⁴⁷ Pryce's research fits Woolman's thought, which places both the self and the self's connection to God in perspective. Pryce maintains that the alertness to divine revelation present in quietistic Quakerism challenged the popular sense of self 'which was defined by social categories and the perceptions of others'.⁴⁸

For Woolman, 'resignation' and attention to divine revelation were not acts of self-annihilation and psychological abdication, as modernist scholars suggest.⁴⁹ Rather, these quietistic and mystical elements of Woolman's theology comprised a 'search for the true selfhood revealed in the transformative contract held in the Divine gift'.⁵⁰ That

⁴⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 132.

⁴⁵ See 4.1.

⁴⁶ Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 1; see also 1.2.4 d).

⁴⁷ Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 4.

⁴⁸ Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 4.

⁴⁹ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 186; Jones, 'Quietism', 3. For a similar analysis of Anthony Benezet, see, Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity', 106-107.

⁵⁰ Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 4.

is, Woolman believed that he could be united to God's will and reside in a state of consistency within God's will. This transformation was enabled and enacted in history as the self-emptied 'false' self, that is, the alienated-from-God-self, attended to the effects of the divine 'principle', which illuminated the true-self, or the perfected-in-God self.⁵¹ Woolman believed that this transformation into a new state⁵² was achieved through 'resignation' to the divine revelation. Until that 'resignation' and 'subjection' occurred, the individual was hopelessly alienated from the direct communion God had ordained for divine-human intimacy.⁵³ In his youth, Woolman remembered that there had been 'an unsubjected will which rendered my labours fruitless' until, through the persistence of God's revelatory activity – what Woolman called the 'continuance of heavenly visitations' – he was 'made to bow down in spirit before the Lord'.⁵⁴ The 'subjection' and 'resignation' of the will was, for Woolman, not the abdication of self, but the birth of the true-self, in relationship to the God who reveals a conviction consistent with mystical theology,⁵⁵ and the state out of which his theogico-social vision was born.

Pryce identifies four elements of Quietism, which can helpfully be applied to Woolman's epistemology of revelation: firstly, Woolman believed that 'true self-hood' as a divinised and transformed agent was achieved through 'self-emptying'.⁵⁶ Indeed, Pryce contends of mystics that giving one's self over to God is the only source of real knowledge and results in the discovery of one's true identity and selfhood.⁵⁷ Secondly,

⁵¹ See also, Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 4.

⁵² See 2.2, 4.1, and 4.2 for a description of Woolman's theogico-social vision

⁵³ Woolman, 'Journal', 27.

⁵⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 27.

⁵⁵ Walter Altman, 'John Woolman's Reading of the Mystics', *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association* 48 (1959): 107.

⁵⁶ Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 4.

⁵⁷ Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 5.

Woolman understood God's 'presence'⁵⁸ to be immediately available to guide and govern individuals and society. Thirdly, Woolman believed that 'attention to inwardness' and the practice of interior 'quiet'⁵⁹ was essential to the divinely ordained mode of revelation. Finally, as Woolman's *Journal* shows, he believed that God's intention for the individual was accomplished through a 'spiritual itinerary' that, in Quaker parlance, moved from the new birth of convincement through 'resignation' into a state of perfection.⁶⁰

b) Participation in God's will

If 'resignation' was both the process and event Woolman believed united the individual to God's will, then the experience of 'weakness' confirmed the divine revelation and disclosed practical embodiments and specific courses of action which emerged out of the 'resigned' state.⁶¹ Woolman believed the confounding of activity derived from the alienated human will, the false-self, would be replaced by the certainty of human-divine partnership, the true-self. The mode of quiet, stillness and listening, Woolman believed, was the divinely appointed means for drawing humanity towards knowledge of right action consistent with God's revealed, alternative societal ordering.

Pryce helpfully expands on the theology underlying this epistemology, in five ways that highlight how divine revelation was enacted.⁶² These are considered in turn below. Firstly, she argues that the mystical consciousness is characterised by 'a movement away from sense-perception and reflective consciousness' along with 'the putting aside of rational arguments in order not to obstruct the way' to knowledge of

⁵⁸ Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 5.

⁵⁹ Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 5.

⁶⁰ Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 5.

⁶¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 57.

⁶² Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 2.

God.⁶³ Woolman believed that putting aside the false-wisdom of the false-self enabled the true-self to fulfill Christ's purposes:

Now I find that in pure obedience the mind learns contentment in appearing weak and foolish to that wisdom which is of the world: and in these lowly labours, they who stand in a low place, rightly exercised under the cross, will find nourishment.

The gift is pure; and while the eye is single in attending thereto, the understanding is preserved clear; self is kept out; and we rejoice in filling up that which remains of the afflictions of Christ for his body's sake, which is the church.⁶⁴

For Woolman, revelation was discerned through the renunciation of worldly wisdom and the emergence of a new paradigm of right action and correct knowing in the manner of the suffering Christ. This revelation was only available when rational arguments were discarded. Rejecting 'that wisdom which is of the world' created a state 'under the cross' which entailed a new perception of the world.⁶⁵ In that state 'the understanding is preserved clear', so that the faithful could see and know in ways unavailable to those alienated from God's purposes.⁶⁶ Rather than contributing to the world's sinfulness, the faithful participate in the redemptive and justifying suffering of Christ and continue that work on earth.⁶⁷

Pryce contends that the second piece of the theological basis to this epistemology was a knowledge of God that stood in 'absolute authentic integrity...without any hindrances or additions.'⁶⁸ Thus, Woolman advocated that

⁶³ Early Quaker, Isaac Pennington, illustrated this concept in a 1679 letter: 'Every secret thing, every spiritual mystery, but what God opens to thee, is too high and wonderful for thee...The error is, still, in the comprehending, knowing mind...' Isaac Pennington, *Letters of Isaac Pennington*, vol. 7, Friends Family Library (Philadelphia: Nathan Kite, 1842), 279; cf. Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 2.

⁶⁴ John Woolman, 'Concerning the Ministry', in *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Amelia M. Gummere (New York: Macmillan company, 1922), 315.

⁶⁵ Woolman, 'Concerning the Ministry', 315.

⁶⁶ Woolman, 'Concerning the Ministry', 315.

⁶⁷ Woolman, 'Concerning the Ministry', 315.

⁶⁸ Pryce notes that Fox confirmed this theology when he enjoined Quakers to '...wait on that which is

attention to God's will opened to the faithful a position of perfect obedience and union, separated from sinful and corrupt ways of knowing and being in the world.⁶⁹ For example, Woolman observed the merchant trade first-hand as he sailed to England, in 1772, and was displeased with what he saw:

In the love of money, and in the wisdom of this world, the urgency of affairs push forward, nor can the mind in this state discern the good and perfect will of God concerning us...Thus the love of God is manifest in calling to us to come out of that which stands in Confusion...To do business because the urgency of our affairs demands it, when we feel it is against the purity of Truth, is to go on in that which like Ephraim mixeth amongst the nations.⁷⁰

He believed that humanity could exist in a state of solidarity with the 'good and perfect will of God', 'unmixed', as it were, with the contaminations of the false-self. Intimate proximity to the divine will purified the individual and, instead of living in alienation and confusion, the redeemed individual could know directly how to act and be in the world. In that state, God's true intention for human destiny was opened to the true-self, but only through the work of divine revelation.

The third theological element in this epistemology, as outlined by Pryce, derives from the integrity with which the soul has knowledge of divine revelation, that is the soul's knowledge 'regarding its true self [that] has no need of sound or spoken word since it reveals' Truth that surpasses human language.⁷¹ At times, Quaker worship provided Woolman with this experience of divine revelation beyond words 'that to me it

pure, which gathers you out of the world's nature, disposition, conversation, churches, forms and customs...' George Fox, *The Works of George Fox*, vol. 7 (Philadelphia: Marcus T. C. Gould, 1831), 53; cf. Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 2.

⁶⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 174-175.

⁷⁰ Woolman, 'MS T2, Manuscript of John Woolman's Sea Journal'.

⁷¹ As an example of 17th century Quaker thought, Pryce notes Pennington's letter which encouraged Quakers to be aware of 'that ministration of life and power, wherein things are known and felt beyond what words can utter.' Pennington, *Letters*, 22; cf. Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 2.

was a time of heavenly refreshment in a silent meeting.⁷² For Woolman, the 'Language' of the divine was unintelligible through human wisdom and inaudible to human senses; yet it was recognisable, intelligible and transformational for the faithful.⁷³ This knowledge of revelation beyond words pointed to the alternative ordering, which was impending and real, but only experienced by those privy to the divine voice, a typical feature of apocalyptic thought.⁷⁴

A fourth theological element in Woolman's epistemology, from Pryce's framework, is that Woolman's experience was 'irrefutable simply because it [was] a manifestation from [the] "inward conscience."⁷⁵ In other words, this inward revelation was tantamount to an awareness of real divine presence 'and as such transcends any attempt at rationalisation.'⁷⁶ Woolman's journey, in 1763, into the Pennsylvania wilderness to visit Native Americans at Wyalusing, occasioned much consideration concerning the wisdom of the journey because hostilities between colonists and natives were increasing.⁷⁷ However, for Woolman, stillness within a state of 'resignation' to God's will confirmed the appropriateness of what, from another perspective, might have appeared reckless.⁷⁸ This epistemology emboldened and confirmed action as it originated out of the divine revelation: 'and thus from time to time my mind was centered in resignation, in which I always found quietness.'⁷⁹ Elsewhere, as Woolman

⁷² Woolman, 'Journal', 149.

⁷³ Woolman, 'Journal', 31, 57, 61, 33; Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444-445; John Woolman, 'On Silent Worship', in *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Amelia M. Gummere (New York: Macmillan company, 1922), 510; John Woolman, 'On a Sailor's Life', in *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Amelia M. Gummere (New York: Macmillan Company, 1922), 508.

⁷⁴ Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', 6.

⁷⁵ Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 2.

⁷⁶ Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 2.

⁷⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 134.

⁷⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 134.

⁷⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 134.

considered specific theologically-social protests to slavery, he wrote, 'my mind was inward to the Lord.'⁸⁰

Finally, knowledge of God, Woolman believed, resulted in the transformation of the soul, or 'mind', itself: a new state within the divine will and the unfolding kingdom of God. Pryce contends that the 'journey is one of "ascent" ...in which the soul divests itself of all unnecessary garments, and in which the one remaining, unchangeable certainty is "the awareness of presence."⁸¹

In this transformed state, the immutability of God became, for Woolman, the reality of the true-self. The divine revelatory act claimed those 'resigned' to it in a way that brought divine power into world events. Dandelion follows Jones in interpreting Woolman's choice of tailoring, farming and itinerant ministry over his retail business as an example of Woolman withdrawing from the world out of fear of contamination.⁸² However, several years before Woolman gave up his retail trading, he framed his decision to learn the business of a tailor in terms of obedience to the divine revelation which transformed his priorities:

I believed the hand of *Providence pointed out* this business [tailoring] for me and was taught to be content with it, though I felt at times a disposition that would have sought for something greater. But through the *revelation of Jesus Christ*, I had seen the happiness of humility, and there was an earnest desire in me to enter deep into it; and at times this desire arose to a degree of fervent supplication, wherein my soul was so environed with heavenly light and consolation that things were made easy

⁸⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 38.

⁸¹ Pryce argues that this transformation led early Quakers to consider themselves as part of a different type of existence. For example, in 1661, Fox wrote: 'Dear Friends - In the stillness and silence of the power of the Almighty, which never varies, alters, nor changes', and counselled that the recipients should live in 'the unchangeable life... mind... spirit and wisdom.... so that ye will feel the blessing and presence of the Lord God of life amongst you...' Fox, *Works*, vol. 7, p. 198; Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 3.

⁸² Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity', 100-101; Jones, *Later Periods of Quakerism*, 67.

to me which had been otherwise.⁸³

This position of consistency within the divine revelation led Woolman to consider himself and his role in social affairs in a new 'heavenly light'.⁸⁴ From this perspective, Woolman's decision to give up most of his retail business a decade after this recollection occurred⁸⁵ can be described as the result of direct revelation out of a transformed nature which viewed 'things' like achievement, class privilege and human rationality as subject to the revelation of Christ. The transformation Woolman believed possible through a mystical union with divine revelation, accessible through a framework of 'resignation' and quiet, was seen not only in his social protest, but in the way he organised his daily life according to his vision of God's kingdom.⁸⁶ The transformation Woolman described on this occasion in his mid-twenties would become emblematic of the transformation he believed was available to the whole of society when human affairs were faithful to the revelation and unfolding reformation of the government of Christ.⁸⁷

It was the apocalypse of God's will on the heart that transformed Woolman's sense of the rightly ordered, God-directed society and his confidence in the ability of faithful humanity to enflesh that revelation. Pryce argues that notions of 'presence' and a consciousness of the divine will in quietistic Quakerism are 'expressed in various theological statements of belief, as well as in exhortations to stillness and silence, [and] waiting.'⁸⁸ As he sailed to England, in 1772, Woolman appealed to a stillness in the divine presence when he condemned what he thought were the greed-driven practices of

⁸³ Woolman, 'Journal', 35-36. Emphasis mine.

⁸⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 35-36.

⁸⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 53.

⁸⁶ See 2.2 and 4.1.1.

⁸⁷ See chapter 4.

⁸⁸ Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 3-4.

the transatlantic shipping industry.⁸⁹ He claimed, that attention to God's will and 'silence as to every motion proceeding from the love of money, and an humble waiting upon God to know his will concerning us', subverted greed and reorganised social practices according to God's revelation.⁹⁰

The transformed, alternative reality Woolman understood to be consistent with God's will was part of the apocalyptic theology in which all forms of existence not under God's reign were renounced.⁹¹ He understood himself to be qualified to make such a pronouncement because he was no longer in the alienated-from-God-self, but in a state of union with God in which he was enabled to see the true nature of sin and experienced God's will revealed in him:

"Judge not," said our Blessed Lord, "that ye be not judged." Now this forbidding alludes to man's judgment, and points out the necessity of our humbly attending to that sanctifying power, under which the faithful experience the Lord to be "a spirit of judgment to them." Isa. xxviii. 6. And as we feel his Holy Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body in us, we can say, "it is no more I that live, but Christ that liveth in me"; here right judgment is known.

And while divine love prevails in our hearts, & self in us is brought under judgment, a preparation is felt to labour in a right manner with offenders; but if we abide not in this love, our outward performance in dealing with others & in imitation of worshipers, degenerates into formality. For "this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."

⁸⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 170–171.

⁹⁰ Woolman's message, probably unknowingly, echoed Penington's sentiment when Penington urged Friends to:

mind Truth, the service, enjoyment, and possession of it in your hearts; and so to walk, as ye may bring no disgrace upon it, but may be a good savour in the places where ye live - the meek, innocent, tender, righteous life reigning in you, governing over you, and shining through you, in the eyes of all with whom ye converse.

And that 'it is not enough to hear of Christ, or to read of Christ; but this is the thing – to feel him my root, my life, my foundation.' For both Penington and Woolman, the true 'foundation' was experienced through an inward stillness which coincided with a position of solidarity with God, which bridged the gulf of alienation between God and humanity and liberated the true-self and rightly directed social customs. Penington, *Letters*, p. 144, 27; Woolman, 'Journal', 170–171; cf. Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 4.

⁹¹ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 477.

1 John v. 3.⁹²

Woolman believed that he was in a state beyond 'man's judgment' and so was capable of rightly discerning Truth and evil.⁹³ Having been sanctified, Woolman believed he no longer lived in the false-self, but as 'Christ that liveth in me', which illumined 'right judgment'.⁹⁴ A state of union with God's will established a new, perfected epistemic for speaking and acting on God's behalf, albeit one that required humble 'attending'.⁹⁵ The renunciation of human wisdom and attention to the movement of 'divine love' was inherently connected to the perception of God's will for the individual and for society.⁹⁶

As Woolman said elsewhere,

Deep humility is a strong bulwark, and as we enter into it we find safety and true exaltation. The foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God is stronger than man. Being unclothed of our own wisdom and knowing the abasement of the creature, therein we find that power to arise which gives health and vigor [to] us.⁹⁷

He believed 'resignation' to God's wisdom to be 'health and vigor', the truest most beneficial way for humanity to be. Indeed, 'resignation' and subjection did not imply acquiescence to the way things were in the world, nor to the way things went in the world.⁹⁸ Instead, in 'resignation', he met a divine being that was totally other than the world.⁹⁹ In 'resignation' to divine revelation, the opposition, not the otherness, between the soul and God was overcome.¹⁰⁰ The result, William Christian argues, was 'purity or

⁹² Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 477.

⁹³ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 477.

⁹⁴ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 477.

⁹⁵ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 477.

⁹⁶ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 477.

⁹⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 57.

⁹⁸ William Christian, 'Inwardness and Outward Concerns: A Study of John Woolman's Thought', *Quaker History* 67, no. 2 (1978): 103.

⁹⁹ Christian, 'Inwardness and Outward Concerns', 104.

¹⁰⁰ Christian, 'Inwardness and Outward Concerns', 104.

quietness, clarity of understanding, and clarity of purpose.¹⁰¹

This analysis of Woolman's epistemology illuminates a Quietism that is revelatory and apocalyptic in nature. Woolman's theology of revelation held that a transcendent God opened the true nature of world events and divine dominion. However, Woolman did not believe this revelation to be something that was esoteric and *only* otherworldly. Rather, through 'resignation', he felt that he was able to know and do God's will, revealed immediately to him, in such a way that he became part of it.¹⁰² Thus, he believed his actions and his interpretation of God's will were not mere opinion, but God's direct command.

c) Experience

The absolute fact of divine revelation was part of an epistemology that applied God's Truth subjectively.¹⁰³ Woolman did not even attempt to justify his theology in terms of its rational character, but, did, in terms of its correspondence with divine revelation and the realising of God's kingdom on earth.¹⁰⁴ He claimed that the awareness of divine presence and the transformed state, which arose out of his own conversion, were beyond 'language', and gave him new, experiential knowledge as to his place within the redemption of the 'visible creation'.¹⁰⁵ He described those who were subject to God as new creations who looked and sounded different than in the previous state.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Christian, 'Inwardness and Outward Concerns', 104.

¹⁰² Woolman, 'Journal', 57.

¹⁰³ Woolman, 'Journal', 29.

¹⁰⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 29.

¹⁰⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 29.

¹⁰⁶ Likewise, Fox's 1648 conversionary experience demonstrates a similar experience to Woolman's. For Fox, God revealed a secret knowledge, previously hidden and unknowable by human wisdom, only known through an inward religious experience which revealed the true state of both the spiritual and material world.

...the creation gave another smell unto me than before, beyond what words can utter...

This will be understood by such who have trodden in the same path. Some glances of real beauty may be seen in their faces who dwell in true meekness. There is a harmony in the sound of that voice to which divine love gives utterance, and some appearance of right order in their temper and conduct whose passions are fully regulated. Yet all these do not fully show forth that inward life to such who have not felt it, but this white stone and new name is known rightly to such only who have it.¹⁰⁷

Woolman's reference to a 'white stone and new name' alludes to Revelation 2:17, where the post-Resurrection Christ inaugurated an eschatological community of the faithful with power to overcome Satan and rule over the nations.¹⁰⁸ The true-self, Woolman believed, was only discerned by those who were united with the revelation of God.¹⁰⁹ This secret knowledge of eternal and spiritual states existed in the physical world for those who 'understood'.¹¹⁰ Without that secret knowledge, granted by divine revelation, but hidden to the worldly, the transformed state was impossible.

This was a fully transcendent revelation unknowable through objective proofs or the criteria of reason and thoroughly apocalyptic.¹¹¹ Inaugurated at the moment of

The creation was opened to me, and it was showed me how all things had their names given them according to their nature and virtue... Great things did the Lord lead me into, and wonderful depths were opened unto me, beyond what can by words be declared; but as people come into subjection to the spirit of God, and grow up in the image and power of the Almighty, they may receive the Word of wisdom, that opens all things, and come to know the hidden unity in the Eternal Being.

Fox, *Journal*, 27-28. See also early Quaker influences on Woolman in 5.1: Early Quakers experienced conversion as a total transformation, whereas Woolman's 18th century peers did not view conversion and sanctification as complete until death.

¹⁰⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 29.

¹⁰⁸ Revelation 2:26-29

¹⁰⁹ Early Quaker, Edward Burrough, signed his 1656 pamphlet, 'by one whose name is truly known by the children of the same birth, Edward Burrough.' Like Woolman, Burrough and other early Quakers believed that God had given them a new identity, a new name, which was only known through divine revelation. Dandelion argues that early Quakers lived in a duality of time and experience in which they were known by their outward and worldly names in the world, but truly only known by their new names by God. Woolman appears to share this sense of duality, believing that the real essence of the self was only knowable through revelation. Edward Burrough, *A Trumpet of the Lord Sounded Out of Sion Which Gives a Certayne Sound in the Eares of All Nations, and Is a True Noyse of a Fearfull Earthquake at Hand, Which Shall Shake the Whole Fabrick of the Earth, and the Pillars of its Standing shall Fall, and Never More be Set up Againe* (London: Giles Calvert, 1656), 1; Dandelion, *Liturgies*, 36.

¹¹⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 29.

¹¹¹ Schmithals writes: 'The main concern in apocalyptic is a set of truths which are not generally

conversion,¹¹² Woolman experienced a 'change wrought in me' that was total in scope.¹¹³

Not only did this change alter the standards of ethical behaviour, so that slave-keeping, abusive economic practices and pollution¹¹⁴ were no longer tenable, but it initiated a new, true identity within the world and a new community of the faithful, able to discern God's intentions and participate in the establishment of God's government.¹¹⁵ For Woolman, not even benevolence could 'fully show forth that inward life to such who have not felt it'.¹¹⁶ The kingdom was only understood by those who had been transformed and given a new identity.¹¹⁷

2.1.2 Dreams

In the previous sub-section, I demonstrated that Woolman came to hear and be united with divine revelation through the process and event of 'resignation', in which his will was made to be that of God's. Up to this point, I have discussed only the circumstances through which 'resignation' was achieved, that is, through meetings for worship and corporate decision making. However, Woolman also received divine revelation in enthusiastic and ecstatic forms representative of divine intervention into the natural realm.

accessible and do not at once result from the rational consideration of reality, but must be revealed to man, must be announced to him from beyond himself. What the apocalypticist has to say is therefore new to his hearers; the one truth, formerly unknown but now revealed.' Schmithals, *The Apocalyptic Movement*, 14.

¹¹² See 2.2.1.

¹¹³ Woolman, 'Journal', 29.

¹¹⁴ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 246.

¹¹⁵ See 4.1.1.

¹¹⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 29.

¹¹⁷ Likewise, in 1659, Penington foreshadowed Woolman's theology of revelation: 'for until ye know, and have received the thing itself, ye are at a distance from that to which all belongs.' Isaac Penington, *The Works of Isaac Penington*, vol. 1, 4th ed. (Philadelphia, 1863), 314; cf. Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 4; Woolman, 'Journal', 29.

Dreams and visions do not always receive adequate space in Woolman studies, perhaps because the presence of radical moments of ecstatic revelation have not fitted into the interpretations and biases of previous scholarship.¹¹⁸ Yet, Woolman recorded more dreams than any other 18th century PYM journalist, seven of his own and two of others,¹¹⁹ often at key points in his spiritual itinerary.¹²⁰ Paul Anderson argues that at least one dream, and I contend each of Woolman's visions, can be described as 'eschatological' and 'apocalyptic'.¹²¹ They are apocalyptic because each 'assumes the unveiling of God's purposes and workings transcending and invading the physical world'.¹²² They are eschatological because they expect

God to act with finality in the lives and affairs of humans. The believer is called to partner with God in the unfolding of God's saving/redeeming purposes in the world. Such understandings are not incidental to Woolman's ethical and social stands; they are central and foundational to them.¹²³

It is clear that Woolman understood dreams to be 'revelatory',¹²⁴ however, it is not always the content of the dream, which he wants to impress upon the reader, but the experience of God working radically in the world.¹²⁵

Carla Pestana argues that, in the late 17th century and early 18th century British Atlantic world, dreams were commonly understood to convey information about the

¹¹⁸ Boroughs argues that Woolman's dreams are 'legitimate but of secondary importance.' Boroughs, 'John Woolman: Spirituality and Social Transformation', 23.

¹¹⁹ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 95; John Woolman, 'Journal', 24, 46–47, 160, 161, 161–162, 185–187, 191–192, 297–298; John Woolman, 'John Woolman to John Smith', April 16, 1760, vol. 5, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

¹²⁰ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 59–63.

¹²¹ Paul Anderson, 'The Spiritual Formation of Young John Woolman', in *The Tendering Presence: Essays on John Woolman*, ed. Michael Heller (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 2003), 22.

¹²² Anderson, 'Spiritual Formation of Young John Woolman', 22.

¹²³ Anderson, 'Spiritual Formation of Young John Woolman', 22.

¹²⁴ See also, Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 60.

¹²⁵ Anderson, 'Spiritual Formation of Young John Woolman', 22.

future and the dreamer's place therein and, in fact, constituted 'one area of common ground that, even if it were not always recognized as such, cut across the diversity' of religion in the British empire.¹²⁶ She notes, specifically, that Quaker and Native Americans often shared their dream stories publicly.¹²⁷ Plank adds that Quakers made notes about their dreams and shared their recollections and interpretations with family members and neighbours.¹²⁸

Several of Woolman's dreams are integrated into the theological argument elsewhere in this thesis, but there are three features of Woolman's dreams which illumine important aspects of Woolman's understanding of divine revelation. Firstly, the PYM editorial committee, which originally published the *Journal*, omitted Woolman's dreams, save two visions received during illnesses.¹²⁹ While the inclusion of the dreams in various drafts of Woolman's pre-publication journal indicates that Woolman was impressed with the authority and relevance of his visions,¹³⁰ the editorial committee, for whatever reason, did not agree. This suggests some degree of disagreement among PYM Quakers concerning legitimate modes of revelation and concern about cultivating desired public perceptions of Quaker theology in printed material.¹³¹

Secondly, Woolman's dreams demonstrate the connection between revelation and historical events, even though Woolman did not state it as such. For example, in 1754,

¹²⁶ Carla Gardinier Pestana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 112.

¹²⁷ Pestana, *Protestant Empire*, 112.

¹²⁸ Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 122.

¹²⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 58, 185-186. For an example of how a visionary experience was edited out of the *Journal* see, Woolman, 'Journal', 160-161 fn. 7.

¹³⁰ John Woolman, 'The Journal of John Woolman', in *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Amelia M. Gummere (New York: Macmillan company, 1922), 152 fn. 2.

¹³¹ Notwithstanding the exclusion of some of Woolman's dreams from his journal, there was a tradition of dreaming and dream interpretation in 18th century Quakerism. In 5.2 I describe this tradition and note that Woolman's dreams took on a more eschatological tone than that of his peers.

Woolman dreamed that, as he walked in an orchard, two lights appeared in the east, at different heights.¹³² Then, the air in the east appeared to be 'mingled with fire, and like a terrible storm coming westward the streams of fire reached the orchard where I stood, but I felt no harm.'¹³³ In this dream, an acquaintance was standing near Woolman and was visibly distressed, but Woolman 'felt calm' and said, 'We must all once die, and if it please the Lord that our death be in this way, it is good for us to be resigned.'¹³⁴ Then he went into a nearby house, passed 'sad and troubled' people and went upstairs to look out of the window.¹³⁵ There he saw

in the south three great red streams standing at equal distance from each other, the bottom of which appeared to stand on the earth and the top to reach above the region of the clouds. Across those three streams went less ones, and from each end of such small stream others extended in regular lines to the earth, all red and appeared to extend through the whole southern firmament.¹³⁶

Then a 'multitude' of soldiers, 'some of whom I knew', walked next to the house westward.¹³⁷ Upon seeing Woolman, some of these men scoffed and taunted him and 'soon after, an old captain of the militia came to me, and I was told these men were assembled to improve in the discipline of war.'¹³⁸

Woolman did not interpret this dream for the reader and some of the symbolism remains obscure, but the timing is instructive. Plank considers this dream to be a premonition of the French and Indian War, but notes that, by early 1754, 'nearly everyone in eastern North America was anticipating a war' as European imperialism

¹³² Woolman, 'Journal', 46.

¹³³ Woolman, 'Journal', 46.

¹³⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 46.

¹³⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 46.

¹³⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 46-47.

¹³⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 47.

¹³⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 47.

mounted.¹³⁹ Woolman's dream indicates that he was convinced war was coming to the mid-Atlantic before it actually arrived, 'but that was hardly unusual', Plank contends, 'for a well-read and politically engaged colonist.'¹⁴⁰

We can assume that the two lights in the East represented France and England and the streams of red light, which landed around Woolman, were representations of the arrival of conflict close by. In this vision, Woolman's feeling of safety in the midst of the storm contrasted with the fear of his neighbours and derived from his sense of being 'resigned' to God.¹⁴¹ Woolman anticipated that his friends and neighbours would be swept up in the approaching military activity and he would see the effects of military mobilisation first-hand, which turned out to be the case.¹⁴² This vision was, for Woolman, a revelation of the way of faithfulness in the midst of trying times. While the vision did not dictate how to escape or prevent the coming war, it did reveal how to navigate politically troubled waters without backsliding and provided confidence that he could succeed. It is noteworthy that the very next paragraph after this vision contains Woolman's decision to seek publication of his antislavery essay, *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes*.¹⁴³ There are several probable reasons for the publication of this essay at this time, but it is worth suggesting that this vision of impending war and Woolman's confidence in God's power to deliver those 'resigned' to God, led him to pursue an alternative vision for colonial society from that of transatlantic imperialism and exploitation.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 122.

¹⁴⁰ Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 122.

¹⁴¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 46.

¹⁴² Woolman, 'Journal', 88–89.

¹⁴³ Woolman, 'Journal', 47.

¹⁴⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 46–47.

Thirdly, the presence of ecstatic visions in Woolman's spiritual itinerary was not ancillary to Woolman's theology, but an inherent part of a belief in a divine presence, which was determined to be revealed to the created world and to rule that world through both transcendent revelations and the obedience of the faithful. For Woolman, divine Truths revealed in moments of unconsciousness were harbingers of the eschatological day when God would be so present to the world that the direct governance of Christ would be the norm and human-alienated-from-God wisdom would no longer interfere with the immediacy of divine revelation. That day of union with the divine will was unfolding,¹⁴⁵ but visions like the one described above, were moments of the eschaton breaking into Woolman's present.

While ecstatic visions appear to be an anomaly in Woolman's writing, they are actually the logical culmination of his theology of revelation. For Woolman, dreams directly transferred divine Truth, unfiltered, to the human recipient. In this way, they held special status as moments of unhindered intimacy which revealed how to act in consistency with the theoglico-social vision of God's direct reign over economics, religion and social affairs. These were not moments of other-worldly detachment, but as this dream illustrates, occasions of heavenly wisdom infused into historical events in a way that promoted an alternative vision for society. These revelatory experiences were innate parts of Woolman's apocalypticism.

2.1.3 Summary

Woolman's apocalyptic theology was grounded in his belief that God ruled over

¹⁴⁵ See Woolman's 1770 pleurisy visions in 4.1.1 and 4.1.3.

society and disclosed eternal and transcendent purposes inwardly to human recipients. Humanity could know and participate in God's will by being 'resigned' to the divine will. This epistemic of 'resignation' resulted in a union with the divine revelation. Through the immediacy of God's presence, manifest in those 'resigned' to God's will, divine revelation invaded, made claims upon the world and illumined the alternative order of divine governance that was already established. Woolman's epistemology is important because it was the initial step in his belief that God could intervene in world affairs directly to bring about God's will and that the kingdom of God was unfolding in the lives of the faithful and being enacted through their response in history. The question as to how Woolman felt he came to know God's will now leads us to consider the content of the theoglico-social vision he claimed God had revealed to him.

2.2 The Opening of the Theoglico-Social Vision

Woolman understood supernatural revelation to be dictating a particular theoglico-social vision, one in which all people listened to and obeyed the divine voice that ruled and directed society. I contend this vision was apocalyptic because it dealt with the ultimate destiny of humanity and the created world; an eschatological unfolding, Woolman believed, reorientated societal organisation in accordance with transcendent and eternal purposes.¹⁴⁶ He did not delineate in any single place in his writings every aspect of what a positive vision for society would look like. Woolman's understanding of the divine intentions for social ordering and economy, what he called the 'right use of things' or 'Pure Wisdom',¹⁴⁷ cannot be separated from the myriad of

¹⁴⁶ See 1.4.

¹⁴⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 118–119.

reforms he championed and his responses to the historical circumstances that arose around him. What I argue, here and in chapter 4, is that these reforms were not disparate ethical positions, but the contours of a unified theoglico-social vision of God's direct governance on earth.

Woolman called the theological principle of living in accordance with God's will 'Pure Wisdom', or sometimes, 'universal righteousness'.¹⁴⁸ He declared that, when moderated by 'Pure Wisdom', outward responsibilities and employments would be in line with God's will.¹⁴⁹ However, in the absence of 'Pure Wisdom', people abused power, demanded more of others than was fair and drank alcohol immoderately.¹⁵⁰ 'For by not attending to that use of things which is consistent with universal righteousness, there is an increase of labour which extends beyond what our Heavenly Father intends for us.'¹⁵¹ Woolman believed that 'Pure Wisdom' was the revelation of God's alternative ordering, where all aspects of human behaviour were governed directly by God's will, or, as this thesis contends, according to Woolman's theoglico-social vision. When 'Pure Wisdom' was violated, God's will on earth was refuted and ignored, the essence of apostasy. So, Woolman attempted to convince his fellow colonists to live according to God's 'Pure Wisdom', rather than fallen human, or natural, wisdom.

The concept of 'Pure Wisdom' arises frequently in the prophetic aspects of Woolman's apocalypticism because it was precisely the alternative ethic he desired to spread to others, a life regulated in its outward dimensions by the inward experience of Christ's government.¹⁵² Woolman often applied God's will for human living to specific

¹⁴⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 54.

¹⁴⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 54.

¹⁵⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 54.

¹⁵¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 54.

¹⁵² See chapter 3.

historical circumstances through the rubric of God's countervailing ethic of 'Pure Wisdom'. For example, he proclaimed that labour, which 'extends beyond' God's intention for society, carried with it spiritual repercussions, but, more fundamentally, rejected God's will for societal organisation.¹⁵³

Woolman believed God would govern society through 'Pure Wisdom'. Children would be educated according to the kingdom of God, rather than in a way that emphasised the accumulation of wealth:

When we are thoroughly instructed in the kingdom of God, we are content with that use of things which his wisdom points out, both for ourselves and our children, and are not concerned to learn them the art of getting rich, but are careful that the love of God and a right regard for all their fellow creatures may possess their minds, and that in all their learning their improvements may go forward in pure wisdom. Christ our Shepherd being abundantly able and willing to instruct his family in all things proper for them to know, it remains to be our duty to wait patiently for his help in teaching our families and not seek to forward them in learning by the assistance of that spirit from which he gave his life to redeem us.¹⁵⁴

Woolman did not minimise the economic and social disadvantage of operating under 'pure wisdom', but instead insisted that Christ would 'instruct his family in all things proper for them to know'¹⁵⁵ and declared that 'Divine love imposeth no rigorous or unreasonable commands, but graciously points out the spirit of brotherhood and way to happiness...'¹⁵⁶ This-worldly instruction in the alternative societal ordering of the kingdom of God, Woolman believed, led to a proper use of material things, challenged sinful motivations and established God's purposes on earth.¹⁵⁷

Woolman's vision is predicated on his understanding of convincement, or

¹⁵³ Woolman, 'Journal', 54.

¹⁵⁴ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 263.

¹⁵⁵ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 263.

¹⁵⁶ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 242.

¹⁵⁷ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 263.

conversion, which transformed the faithful to a state of perfection on earth.¹⁵⁸ The redeemed individual was then united to God and able to obey God's dictates.¹⁵⁹ Woolman's vision went beyond human beings, though, and anticipated the redemption of the entire created world and the restoration of an Edenic society.¹⁶⁰ These aspects of his theoglico-social vision describe a society in which God illumined the faithful and revealed a new, alternative vision for the world. In this vision, the eschaton was clearly revealed not as a futurist hope, but as the inevitable destiny which had already broken into world events and made claims on humanity in the present.¹⁶¹ Woolman believed that God would bring about this new society and, in fact, actively intervened in world events to that end and the faithful already realised this vision and partnered with God in enacting it.

2.2.1 '*I Felt the Power of Christ Prevail*': Conversion and the Governance of God's 'Principle'

Woolman began to write the *Journal* at the age of 36 and was impressed by his recollection of his own sinfulness.¹⁶² He felt that, as a young man, he was trapped helplessly in a state of separation from God in which 'vanity was added to vanity, and repentance to repentance' with the result that on 'the whole my mind was more and more alienated from the Truth, and I hastened toward destruction.'¹⁶³ Woolman believed that a state of alienation characterised his pre-convincement existence. He experienced remorse for sin, and then lapsed back into 'mirth', alternating between sin and

¹⁵⁸ See 2.2.1 and 4.2.1.

¹⁵⁹ See 2.2.2.

¹⁶⁰ See 2.2.1 and Appendix B for a fuller analysis of Woolman's vision for creation.

¹⁶¹ See 4.1.1.

¹⁶² Woolman, 'Journal', 25.

¹⁶³ Woolman, 'Journal', 25.

repentance, because he could not get to the point of being 'low enough to cry for help' to God.¹⁶⁴

As he reflected on this period of alienation and struggle, his narrative indicates that he believed it was possible to be transformed and overcome sin, if he would resign himself to God and, thus, come to liberate his true-self.¹⁶⁵ He said that he had remained in the strength of the alienated-from-God self and 'not keeping in that strength which gave victory, I lost ground again...'¹⁶⁶ The turning point came when Woolman looked inward and examined what separated him from the 'pure Truth' he understood to be available to him.¹⁶⁷ He learned from this inward search that, 'I must not go into company as heretofore in my own will, but all the cravings of sense must be governed by a divine principle...and I felt the power of Christ prevail over selfish desires, so that I was preserved in a good degree of steadiness.'¹⁶⁸ This transforming experience, Woolman believed, situated him in a position 'under the cross', in which he 'followed the openings of Truth', so that 'my mind from day to day was more enlightened.'¹⁶⁹ As he reflected on this transformation, he believed there was 'no language...nor any means to convey to another a clear idea' of the 'change wrought in me.'¹⁷⁰

Out of a position of alienation from God, Woolman experienced an apocalypse of the heart, a *real* change of nature, wherein Christ 'prevailed' over sin and established the direct government of God's 'principle', not just in religious matters, but in social

¹⁶⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 26.

¹⁶⁵ See 2.1.1.

¹⁶⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 27–28.

¹⁶⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 28.

¹⁶⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 28.

¹⁶⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 28.

¹⁷⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 29.

affairs as well.¹⁷¹ Under the government of God's 'principle', Woolman followed the divine revelation, or 'openings', into a new theogico-social understanding of his relationship to God, the creation and how to act obediently.¹⁷² Woolman claimed that the natural world enlarged his vision: 'I looked upon the works of God in this visible creation and an awfulness covered me; my heart was tender and often contrite, and a universal love to my fellow creatures increased in me.'¹⁷³

Immediately following his experience of God's victory over sin, Woolman wrote:

that as the mind was moved on an inward principle to love God as an invisible, incomprehensible being, on the same principle it was moved to love him in all his manifestations in the visible world; that as by his breath the flame of life was kindled in all animal and sensitive creatures, to say we love God as unseen and at the same time exercise cruelty toward the least creature moving by his life, or by life derived from him, was a contradiction in itself.¹⁷⁴

Tousley contends that early Quakers sometimes mentioned the theme of restored relationships with the creation in their conversion experience, demonstrated by the concentration of creation-centred 'openings' upon conversion.¹⁷⁵ On this score, Woolman is in line with earlier Friends.¹⁷⁶ Not only did God reveal to Woolman God's intentions for social ordering through the created world, but the created world revealed to Woolman the eschatological purposes of God.¹⁷⁷ In this way, Woolman could see

¹⁷¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 28.

¹⁷² Woolman, 'Journal', 28.

¹⁷³ Woolman, 'Journal', 29; see also, Fox's 1648 vision, in Appendix B.

¹⁷⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 28.

¹⁷⁵ Tousley, 'Experience of Regeneration', 21.

¹⁷⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 28-32.

¹⁷⁷ Plank notes that 18th century Quakers were more likely to study animals than other religious groups. In fact, he contends that many Quaker journal writers of the 18th century gave an experience of finding God in creation. Elsewhere, Plank argues that the harmony of 'all animal and sensitive creatures', as Woolman put it, was a model for God's intention for the whole of the created world and inspired Woolman's social vision. Indeed, Plank is perceptive to argue that 'the key to understanding Woolman's perspective is not to associate him with later advocates of animal rights, but to see him as

God's irruption into time and history everywhere he turned in the rural landscape.

At conversion, Woolman believed God revealed to him that the divine work went beyond the confines of Quakerism, potentially to include all people under the government of Christ: 'I found no narrowness respecting sects and opinions, but believed that sincere, upright-hearted people in every Society, who truly loved God were acceptable of him.'¹⁷⁸ For Woolman, the elect were those who 'truly loved God'¹⁷⁹ and, later, Woolman advocated that the faithful were those who lived in 'the real substance of religion, where practice doth harmonize with principle',¹⁸⁰ even if they 'in some points hold doctrines distinguishable from some which we [Quakers] hold...[but] in all ages where people were faithful to the light and understanding which the Most High afforded them, they found acceptance with him.'¹⁸¹ The true faithful, or the true Church, Woolman believed, were people of all nations, who had 'attended to that pure Light which in some degree hath opened their understandings',¹⁸² whether they be Native Americans,¹⁸³ Catholics,¹⁸⁴ or Presbyterians.¹⁸⁵ And Woolman did not only allow for people of other nationalities to be a part of the elect, but also people of other religious groups.¹⁸⁶ Woolman conceded that it was possible to be a member of a pagan religion and still 'be of that number who fear God and work righteousness'.¹⁸⁷ However,

the product of a millenarian tradition within Quakerism, one that assigned the animals in every landscape cosmological significance...' However, as I argue in 4.1, Woolman's eschatology is best described as amillennial. Geoffrey Plank, "The Flame of Life Was Kindled in All Animal and Sensitive Creatures": One Quaker Colonist's View of Animal Life', *Church History* 76, no. 3 (2007): 573–574; Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 3.

¹⁷⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 28.

¹⁷⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 28.

¹⁸⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 88.

¹⁸¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 98.

¹⁸² Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 481.

¹⁸³ Woolman, 'Journal', 122-123.

¹⁸⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 75.

¹⁸⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 41.

¹⁸⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on Keeping Negroes; Part Second', 210.

¹⁸⁷ Woolman, 'Considerations on Keeping Negroes; Part Second', 210.

Woolman also implied that there were people who claimed to be Christians – and even Quakers – who were, in fact, pagans 'in the channel of idolatry'.¹⁸⁸ The determining factor was not denominational affiliation, but one's relationship to the revelation of the kingdom.¹⁸⁹

His conversion experience, in which he felt himself transformed into a new creation beyond what words could describe, paralleled his theogico-social vision for society as a whole. The state of perfection in God, which he believed to be realising in his life, also claimed all political and societal organisation because the government of Christ demanded universal acceptance.¹⁹⁰

2.2.2 Alternative Societal Organisation

Woolman believed divine revelation 'livingly opened' a new way of being in the 'pattern' of Christ.¹⁹¹ The example of Christ, for Woolman, was not merely an analogy for moral instruction; it was a transforming presence that reorganised one's life. I will discuss this belief further in 4.2, but the aspect of it I want to highlight in this subsection is that, for Woolman, the revelation of the theogico-social vision included the organisation of society under Christ's leadership.

¹⁸⁸ Woolman, 'Considerations on Keeping Negroes; Part Second', 210.

¹⁸⁹ This analysis calls into question Dandelion's argument that, after the first generation, Quakers 'developed a rigid distinction between Quakers and non-Quakers.' He contends that in 18th century Quakerism there was 'a firm dualism between "the unalloyed" and "the world" and Quakers, though involved with both spheres, desired not to be contaminated by those outside of Quaker circles. At least, for Woolman, the true community of the faithful was not confined to those who were members of Quaker meetings, but to those who lived under the governance of Christ. Dandelion is right that a 'dualism' existed, but the dualism in Woolman's apocalypticism was between those who were in a state of consistency with the governance of Christ and those who were among the apostate, whether they were Quakers or not. Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity', 97, 106.

¹⁹⁰ See 3.2.

¹⁹¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 151.

Woolman believed a society under the leadership of Christ would be primarily an agrarian one, characterised by benevolence among people and the roll-back of the transatlantic marketplace.¹⁹² In this way society itself, not only individuals, could be sanctified under God's governance:

Under the humbling Power of Christ, I have seen that if the leadings of his Holy Spirit were faithfully attended to by his professed Followers in general, the Heathen Nations would be exempl'd [sic] in Righteousness. A less Number of People would be employed on the seas. The Channels of Trade would be more free from Defilement. Fewer People would be employed in Vanities and Superfluities.

The Inhabitants of Cities would be less in Number. Those who have much Lands would become Fathers to the poor.

More People would be employed in the sweet Employment of Husbandry, and in the Path of pure Wisdom, Labour would be an agreeable, healthful Employment.

In the Opening of these Things in my Mind, I feel a living Concern that we who have felt Divine Love in our Hearts may faithfully abide in it, and like good Soldiers endure Hardness for Christ's Sake.¹⁹³

Woolman was not a fan of the burgeoning imperial economy, though his reasons for feeling that way were neither political nor nationalistic.¹⁹⁴ For Woolman, the 'Power of Christ' revealed the apostasy of an economy driven by the profits of a luxury trade.¹⁹⁵ He envisioned a world where the followers of Christ dwelled in 'the leadings of his Holy Spirit' and, by their faithful example, evangelised 'the Heathen Nations'.¹⁹⁶

Specifically, Woolman's theologically-social vision called for fewer people 'employed on the seas' and in the production of what he felt were extravagant items and for fewer people living in cities.¹⁹⁷ While he did not dismiss all sea trade as sinful, he

¹⁹² Woolman, 'On a Sailor's Life', 505–506.

¹⁹³ Woolman, 'On a Sailor's Life', 505–506.

¹⁹⁴ Contrast Woolman's rejection of the transatlantic marketplace with other colonial voices which eschewed economic dependence on England, while promoting material choice in itself. See 1.2.4 a).

¹⁹⁵ Woolman, 'On a Sailor's Life', 505–506.

¹⁹⁶ Woolman, 'On a Sailor's Life', 505–506.

¹⁹⁷ Woolman, 'On a Sailor's Life', 505–506.

argued that trade should be 'no more than was consistent with pure wisdom'.¹⁹⁸ In other words, he believed economy and trade itself should be dictated by God's immediate revelation. Ultimately, his ideal was an agrarian society of farmers and moderate labour. This is not just the vision for world organisation towards which Woolman felt personal affinity, he gave it theological weight by claiming this vision was the result of divine 'openings', encapsulated 'the Path of pure Wisdom', according to God's intentions for the world, and incited the faithful to be persistent, spiritual 'Soldiers' in this cause.¹⁹⁹ 'Abiding under' the leadership of Christ, Woolman believed, not only the larger social structures, but the daily choices of living, would be representative of God's intentions for the world.²⁰⁰ Woolman thought divine revelation carried social implications: 'From an inward purifying, and steadfast abiding under it, springs a lively operative desire for the good of others', he wrote.²⁰¹

2.2.3 Section Summary

Woolman believed God's revealed will contained a vision of society different from the dominant one around him. God's revelation was at once theological and social because it depicted an alternative ordering of economic, social and religious priorities, all centred under Christ's governance. Woolman's conversion experience revealed to him a new state within salvation history which transformed values, relationships and even the created world. Ship owners could sail their vessels only as directed by God, thereby

¹⁹⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 158.

¹⁹⁹ Woolman, 'On a Sailor's Life', 505–506.

²⁰⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 31.

²⁰¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 31.

eradicating the greed-based, exploitative practices of the transatlantic economy. Individuals could take up the cause of the slave and divest themselves of implicit support for slavery.²⁰² Ministers, and, by extension, all people, would speak and act in absolute accordance with the reign of Christ over human affairs.²⁰³

2.3 Chapter Summary

In summary, Woolman's apocalyptic theology originated out of a doctrine of supernatural revelation which informed his theogico-social vision for world organisation. A theology of direct revelation invading the physical world and obscuring the boundaries between religious and social spheres is central to apocalyptic theology.²⁰⁴

Woolman knew of God's revelation through an epistemic of 'resignation' to the divine will that presented itself to him mystically, through the direct activity of 'divine love'²⁰⁵ on his mind and in dreams. Woolman believed that he had received God's revelation which, while universally available to the faithful, was really only known by the few who had walked the same spiritual path he had.

Woolman believed God intervened, not only in human consciousness, but directly in society to establish God's will. When individuals converted to God's direct governance, they were transformed and established in a state of union to the divine will. In obedience to God's revelation, Woolman believed that the faithful could live according to the divine intention for human organisation. Woolman's various reforms were, thus, motivated by this theogico-social vision of God's governance over all

²⁰² Woolman, 'Considerations on Keeping Negroes; Part Second', 210.

²⁰³ Woolman, 'Concerning the Ministry', 315.

²⁰⁴ See 1.4.

²⁰⁵ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 477.

aspects of human affairs. This analysis of Woolman's theology of revelation situates him in an apocalyptic theology of God's sovereign revelation for world affairs.

Revelation was the starting point for exploring Woolman's apocalyptic theology. In the next chapter, I discuss Woolman's propheticism, which directed the content of God's revelation outwardly.

CHAPTER THREE

'HIS WORD WAS IN MY HEART': JOHN WOOLMAN'S PROPHETIC COMMISSION

Woolman's theogico-social vision derived from his belief that God had placed him in a state of direct immediacy to God's revelation. He understood that state of union with God to make new claims on the totality of social behaviour and personal priorities.¹ As Woolman sought to embody this vision, he took on the role of the prophet, promoted his theogico-social vision and resisted what he understood to be a corrupt, apostate vision of greed, antithetical to the realising of God's kingdom 'on earth'.²

Woolman's diverse acts of social confrontation were, in fact, the outward manifestation of his theogico-social vision, a vision of God's governance, which demanded to be proclaimed, as it encompassed all of society and not just the Quakers.³ In the act of proclamation, Woolman desired that the faithful would 'example',⁴ or evangelise, the nations.⁵ He renounced luxury and ways of life contrary to his vision of God's kingdom on earth and resisted attachments that severed his attention from God's direct presence. This prophetic-apocalyptic framework⁶ constitutes an original focus on the theological content of Woolman's ministry in PYM and illustrates the unifying, apocalyptic character of his theology.

¹ See 3.1.

² Woolman, 'Journal', 48.

³ See 3.2.

⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 69.

⁵ See 3.2.2.

⁶ See 1.4.

When I argue that Woolman is to be understood as a prophetic figure, I mean to convey the notion that the inward reception of revelation necessarily made claims on human affairs.⁷ This propheticism was also apocalyptic because, in his actions, Woolman participated in God's intervention in history, the transformation of society, and the defeat of apostasy. Woolman reminded Quakers that God could not be domesticated or fooled. They would 'answer before that Almighty Being who is no respecter of persons'.⁸ In an analysis of the prophetic mode of writing in the American autobiographical tradition, Couser defines prophetic writing as articulating and cultivating an alternative vision for the community at times of crisis and change.⁹ The prophet, Couser contends, is a representative of the community while also speaking for God to the community.¹⁰ Ultimately, the prophet is concerned with absolute obedience to divine revelation, but the prophet is also deeply committed to the community and its eternal welfare.¹¹ In practical embodiments, which enacted God's reign in human affairs, Woolman served as a harbinger of the age to come.¹²

Biblical prophetic literature recognised two norms of faithful behaviour: 1) those that were common to all of humanity; and 2) those that were understood as specific to the prophet's community (i.e. Israel).¹³ When the Hebrew prophets addressed Israel, their ethical categories became more specific.¹⁴ Woolman felt God desired Quaker

⁷ Brueggemann argues that revelation is the beginning point of prophecy. 'Prophecy', he contends, 'is born precisely in that moment when the emergence of social political reality is so radical and inexplicable that it has nothing less than a theological cause.' Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 6.

⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 66.

⁹ Couser, *American Autobiography*, 3.

¹⁰ Couser, *American Autobiography*, 3.

¹¹ Couser, *American Autobiography*, 3.

¹² See 1.4.

¹³ David Petersen, 'Introduction to Prophetic Literature', in *New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, ed. Leander Keck, vol. 6 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 20.

¹⁴ Petersen, 'Introduction to Prophetic Literature', 20.

faithfulness, which led him to view the trials occasioned by the Seven Years' War as God's reproof 'intended for our good' and also 'dispensations of his providence', so that Quakers might 'improve under them'.¹⁵ Likewise, acts of faithfulness contributed to the 'spreading' of God's intentions throughout society 'by means agreeable to his infinite wisdom'.¹⁶ Woolman saw God's hand at work in historical events, calling people back to faithfulness. Human apostasy resulted in the need for divine reproof and chastisement. God intervened in history, Woolman believed, in a very direct way. In his self-understanding as a prophet, Woolman interpreted world events for his religious community, according to his apocalyptic theology, because God's justice made claims on the affairs of the world and established divine purposes through practical embodiments that enacted God's reign.

Woolman's identification of God's activity in history was both prophetic and eschatological. To identify historic events with God's initiative and purpose presupposes a *telos* to history. Additionally, the naming of God's activity in the events of history claimed that God's intention for the world was knowable. Woolman interpreted the events of history, whether they were war¹⁷ or small pox,¹⁸ as God's design for the created order. In other words, he claimed to know what the *telos* of historical process and divine intentions entailed and he identified those eschatological purposes. In this schema, human consciousness, theology, and action need to converge with the divine plan. The cooperation of the Christian community, with each other and with God in human-divine partnership, was essential in deciding the course of events.¹⁹

¹⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 88, 98.

¹⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 67.

¹⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 48–50.

¹⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 102.

¹⁹ See, Gerhard Friedrich, 'Protestant Theology', in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry

Thus, this chapter argues that Woolman's public ministry was concerned with his theogico-social vision²⁰ of God's will for human affairs inbreaking into the physical realm. This state of union with God²¹ necessarily entailed an outward dimension consistent with the transformed state of events Woolman believed God intended for creation. Firstly, this chapter explores Woolman's sense of commissioning to the prophetic role and his conceptions of what such a role entails.²² Then, this chapter demonstrates that the content of Woolman's message was the application of his theogico-social vision to human affairs and societal organisation.²³ For Woolman, included in this message was an evangelising impetus which: declared God's claim over the whole world,²⁴ renounced idolatrous influences,²⁵ and challenged the alienation of sin.²⁶ These features are taken up in turn below.

3.1 A 'Trumpet' for the Lord: Woolman's Prophetic Self-Identification

Woolman's conversion narrative²⁷ contains his prophetic commissioning. In this event, submission to the divine will brought Woolman into a state in which he could discern and interpret God's message and then proclaim it to others with divine authority as God's spokesperson:

I was thus humbled and disciplined under the cross, my understanding became more strengthened to distinguish the language of the pure Spirit

²⁰ Walls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 253.

²¹ See 3.2.

²² See 2.1.

²³ See 3.1.

²⁴ See 3.2.

²⁵ See 3.2.2.

²⁶ See 3.2.3.

²⁷ See 3.2.4.

²⁷ See also, 2.2.1.

which inwardly moves upon the heart and taught [me] to wait in silence sometimes many weeks together, until I felt that rise which prepares the creature to stand like a trumpet through which the Lord speaks to his flock.²⁸

Attention to God's will, Woolman believed, enabled him to interpret God's 'language' and then take on the role of a prophet and serve as God's 'trumpet'.²⁹ Attention to God liberated the true-self³⁰ for ministry, as God's will and the human will became one. Woolman's commissioning to prophetic ministry, then, was a model for his ideal for the whole world under the governance of Christ. Woolman insisted that 'true ministers of Jesus Christ' of any religious persuasion 'are called to minister of that which they have tasted and handled spiritually'.³¹ The true faithful³² were granted the ability to distinguish God's 'language' so as to make known and proclaim the true state of world affairs.³³ Thus, Woolman's apocalyptic theology involved a prophetic element when Woolman proclaimed the message revealed from God to others.

Woolman argued that the faithful, 'governed by the spirit of Christ and thereby made sons of God', are called to participate in the 'same great cause' with which Christ was involved, namely, 'the eternal happiness' of humanity.³⁴ God's revelation, Woolman believed, 'not only instructed in our Duty to God, but also in the Affairs which necessarily relate to this Life'.³⁵ The effect of this revelation was the effusion of divine presence in human affairs, so that "“whatsoever we do in Word or Deed, may be done in

²⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 31.

²⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 31.

³⁰ That is, the post-conversion self united with God established in a state under the governance of Christ. See 2.1.

³¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 31.

³² See 2.2.1.

³³ Woolman, 'Journal', 31.

³⁴ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 208.

³⁵ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 393.

his name.' Col. iii. 17.³⁶ Since Woolman believed that the immediacy of God's revelation, in essence, divinised his actions, he could literally enact God's eschatological and salvific purposes within world affairs and 'labour diligently according to the strength given me for the coming of the kingdom of Christ on earth as it is in heaven.'³⁷ For Woolman, when humanity acted in obedience to God and experienced the 'Coming' of Christ,³⁸ human actions were transformed ontologically in a way that posited relationship with God as the source and method of all actions. This was action which arose out of a state of union with God, so that it was on God's behalf and in God's name. Woolman felt that it was the divine presence that made the human activity effectual and, in partnership with God, built God's kingdom on earth. Action and effort undertaken in the strength of the alienated-from-God self was destined to be 'fruitless' in the scope of God's alternatively ordered reality,³⁹ while the partnership of true-self and the divine brought about assurance of ultimate success.⁴⁰

The prophetic commission, Woolman stated, was a matter of obedience to God.⁴¹ In his second antislavery essay, Woolman described the difficulty of confronting slave-keepers with their apostasy because slavery was an accepted practice.⁴² He went on to express that difficulty using the words of the Hebrew prophets.⁴³ He wrote:

The repeated charges which God gave to his prophets imply the danger they were in of erring on this hand: "Be not afraid of their faces; for I am

³⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 393.

³⁷ Woolman, 'MS T1, Sea Journal', 18.

³⁸ Woolman, 'Examples of Perfection', 2–3.

³⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 27.

⁴⁰ Woolman often used a formulation of Romans 8:28 to express his conviction that the work of God in and through him would be beneficial: 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.' See, Woolman, 'Journal', 136.

⁴¹ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 212.

⁴² Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 212

⁴³ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 212.

with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord." Jer. 1:8. "Speak...all the words that I command thee to speak to them; diminish not a word." Jer. 26:2. "And thou son of man, be not afraid of them...nor dismayed at their looks. Speak my words to them, whether they will bear or forebear." Ezek. 2:6[-7].⁴⁴

Directly after quoting these biblical commands to obey the divine mandate despite opposition, Woolman proceeded, in the spirit of 'duty', to confront slave-keepers in a gathered meeting of peers.⁴⁵ This passage illustrates the way Woolman placed himself within the stream of the ongoing prophetic tradition. He felt he could no more refrain from his prophetic task than could Jeremiah.

3.1.2 'A Friendship Exceeding the Friendship of Men': Conflict and Suffering in Woolman's Prophetic Self-identification

Woolman believed that he could act perfectly within God's will,⁴⁶ a theology that upheld him in times of conflict with his religious community, since he was not acting on his own, but, as he claimed, on behalf of God.⁴⁷ As Brueggeman notes, the two elements of the prophet Jeremiah's grief were, firstly, his grief for the people who were approaching their end; and, secondly, grief because no one would listen and no one saw what was so transparent to him.⁴⁸ For Woolman, the willingness to endure the scorn of others was justified by the upward sweep of history towards God's kingdom.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, he experienced distress at the disparity between his theogico-social vision and the reality of apostasy he witnessed in the world around him. So much so

⁴⁴ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 212.

⁴⁵ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 212-213.

⁴⁶ See also 4.2.

⁴⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 52.

⁴⁸ Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 47.

⁴⁹ Altman argues that Woolman's reading reinforced this belief. Altman, 'John Woolman's Reading', 174-175.

that, on one occasion, he was 'almost overwhelmed' by a seemingly tangible encounter with sin, but was ultimately upheld by God's direct presence.⁵⁰ Woolman experienced the scorn of others and the gap between God's intentions for the world and the world as it was as a trial, a suffering, a 'baptism' into the prophetic spirit of God's governance, which intensified his realisation of God's will as the spiritual conflict intensified: 'I know not that I Ever have had a Sharper conflict in Spirit or better understood what it was to take up the Cross than of late.'⁵¹ He desired to speak as the inheritor and embodiment of the best ideals of his religious community.⁵² Thus, the persecution of 'faithful Friends in early times' because of their 'steady opposition...to wrong things then approved of' were a model for his own expectations of religious faithfulness and situated his propheticism within his community's own traditions.⁵³

The suffering and conflict, which resulted from the disparity between Woolman's vision for society and the reality of the situation as he discerned it, resulted in opportunity for strife and social disconnection. Here, the reluctance of the prophet Jeremiah was a model for Woolman.⁵⁴ Woolman's own reluctance to the prophetic vocation assured him that he acted not in his human will, but in God's will. This reluctance and idealisation of suffering emboldened his sense of mission despite opposition.⁵⁵ On one occasion, while traveling in the South, Woolman attended an annual gathering of Quaker ministers and elders in which he felt led by God to confront the group with their sin, though his *Journal* does not identify what that sin was.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 64.

⁵¹ John Woolman to Sarah Woolman, June 14, 1760, 1, Woolman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁵² Woolman, 'Journal', 83.

⁵³ Woolman, 'Journal', 83.

⁵⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 52.

⁵⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 52.

⁵⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 52.

Directly after sharing his leading to confront the group, he wrote about the necessity of enduring in the midst of conflict because God's calling could not be resisted:

Through the humbling dispensations of divine providence men are sometimes fitted for his service. The messages of the prophet Jeremiah were so disagreeable to the people and so reverse to the spirit they lived in that he became the object of their reproach and in the weakness of nature thought to desist from his prophetic office, but saith he: "His word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing and could not stay" [Jer. 20:9]. I saw at this time that if I was honest to declare that which Truth opened in me, I could not please all men, and laboured to be content in the way of my duty, however disagreeable to my own inclination.⁵⁷

God's revealed Truth, as Woolman interpreted it, led him into conflict with other Quakers, but the prophetic identity in which the reluctant prophet acted only as compelled by God, guided and informed his interactions. In fact, Woolman claimed that the prophet who neglected the revealed will of God and did not confront Quakers 'undermine[d] the foundation of true unity.'⁵⁸ Woolman modified the accepted Quaker criteria for corporate unity⁵⁹ by emphasising obedience to divine revelation as 'true unity'.

For Woolman, 'true unity' was obedience to the prophetic task, regardless of how that revelation would be received.⁶⁰ What enabled Woolman to remain connected to the

⁵⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 52.

⁵⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 112.

⁵⁹ The maintenance of corporate unity was a key theological value for Quakers because corporate unity reflected the unity of Christ. Individual behaviour not in line with Quaker communal norms could bring about the charge of 'singularity'. The individual Quaker charged with 'singularity' risked alienation from the larger Quaker body. This placed individual Quakers in a paradoxical position. On one hand, they were obligated to discern and obey divine truth. On the other hand, the 'singular' appropriation and outward embodiment of divine truth threatened corporate unity and challenged the status and acceptability of Quaker tribal norms. Around the time of Woolman's death, Esther Tuke took great pains to defend Woolman's ministry from the charge of singularity. Esther Tuke to "Friend", 10mo 14, 1772, Swarthmore College, Friends Historical Library; Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism*, 37; Moore, *Light in Their Consciences*, 80-81; Meranze, 'Materializing Conscience', 75.

⁶⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 112.

corporate body, however, was his belief that the prophet was responsible for executing the divine revelation, but not for the 'effects' of delivering that revelation.⁶¹ Since Woolman understood himself to be God's 'trumpet', he was responsible for delivering God's revelation and, of course, he had an investment in how it was received or whether or not it was acted upon in his community, but he was not responsible for the community's response. On several occasions, Woolman confronted a gathered body of Quakers with his understanding of God's will in relation to the evils of slavery or lotteries or excessive wealth.⁶² The meetings became contentious and Woolman could see that he could not push any further and so 'felt easy to leave all to him who alone is able to turn the hearts of the mighty and make way for the spreading of Truth in the earth by means agreeable to his infinite wisdom.'⁶³ On one hand, this suggests that Woolman, despite his lofty theological rhetoric, was, to a certain extent, a pragmatist. On the other hand, 'to leave all to him' is consistent with Woolman's conviction that, ultimately, God is the sovereign revealer, whose will would be accomplished. In this sense, Woolman's own experience of revelation led him to believe that God would 'make way', as he put it, in God's own time.⁶⁴

These occasions of conflict and the difficulties of challenging group unity contributed to a sense of suffering, which, in turn, reinforced his confidence in divine revelation and his prophetic task.⁶⁵ For instance, Woolman, who was qualified to write legal documents, refused to write a will for a respected Quaker figure because the man

⁶¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 72.

⁶² Woolman, 'Journal', 66-67, 110.

⁶³ Woolman, 'Journal', 66-67.

⁶⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 66-67.

⁶⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 46.

wished to bequeath his slaves to his children.⁶⁶ Woolman noted that such a conviction not only cost him in terms of material success, but also carried a cost in his relationship to his community, as he incurred the anger of others.⁶⁷ 'In this case', Woolman wrote, 'I had a fresh confirmation that acting contrary to present outward interest from a motive of divine love and in regard to truth and righteousness, and thereby incurring the resentments of people, opens the way to a treasure better than silver and to a friendship exceeding the friendship of men.'⁶⁸ In other words, Woolman thought that obedience to God's desire in times of tribulation actually brought him closer in spiritual proximity to the divine source of revelation, reinforced the revelation, and, ultimately, reached the 'true witness' in others in a way that superseded his capacity alone.⁶⁹

In this way revelation, conflict and suffering became mutually reinforcing elements of Woolman's prophetic identity. The expectation of conflict and suffering enabled Woolman to endure charges of 'singularity' because the Hebrew prophets had already illustrated that would be the case.⁷⁰ Moreover, by describing the personal anguish of maintaining his connection to the larger body of Quakers, Woolman placed himself in the footsteps of the Hebrew prophets who maintained their connections to Israel and Judah.⁷¹ For Woolman, it was an essential part of the prophetic task not only to disseminate his interpretation of divine revelation, but to do so within the community, which, to a large extent, chaffed at the message.

The prophetic position of being God's representative to the community, while

⁶⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 46.

⁶⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 46.

⁶⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 46.

⁶⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 73.

⁷⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 107-108.

⁷¹ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 452-453; Woolman, 'Journal', 148.

also being a committed part of the community, resulted in a tension between Woolman's apocalyptic theology and the pragmatism of working within a religious group with varied religious and economic interests.⁷² It is not surprising, then, that Woolman did not adopt the habit of using divine 'direct address' to confront evildoers, like the early Quakers did.⁷³ However, his prophetic vision more universalised and blatantly political than the sectarian focus of his 18th century peers, and was not always accepted.⁷⁴ Woolman's confrontation with what he considered to be the apostate social expression around him, held in relief the theoglico-social transformation he thought God would bring about. Thus, in his prophetic vocation, Woolman served as a harbinger of the apocalypse that was already unfolding.

The interweaving of God's purposes and human agency, as embodied in the prophetic task, grounded Woolman's apocalypticism in historical events. Woolman believed that God's will was to be revealed on earth in a very real way and that God would govern human affairs spiritually, but truly. Thus, Woolman placed himself at the crux of the *telos* of God's purposes for humanity and their realisation in historical time. The prophetic self-identification Woolman idealised facilitated the dissemination of the content of divine revelation. The content of the vision he proclaimed is outlined in the next section, where I argue that Woolman understood himself to be in a position of responsibility before God to interpret God's immediate revelation in world occurrence.

3.2 The Proclamation of the Theoglico-Social Vision

⁷² See 5.2 for Woolman's theological distinctiveness amidst his reform minded peers.

⁷³ See 5.1.

⁷⁴ See 5.2.

The specific social issues Woolman challenged were those issues he could no longer accommodate without violating his understanding of the unfolding, remade world Christ had revealed to him.⁷⁵ As Woolman attended to God's revealed will, existing social structures were subverted by a new ethic dictated by God's immediate presence.⁷⁶ He could not benefit from slave labour because oppression and exploitation resisted the transformation of the divine revelation. He could not continue as before in his retail business when retail was part of a transatlantic economy which he felt advanced the idolatry of materialism, luxury and war.⁷⁷ He could not use silver dinnerware⁷⁸ when such opulence was the result of a misallocation and abuse of labour which hindered the spreading of the peaceable kingdom.⁷⁹ He proclaimed against the emerging luxury trade which created a sense of superiority in the economic elite and hindered the wealthy from full 'resignation' to God's revelation in all things.⁸⁰

In this section, I contend that Woolman articulated his vision over and against those 'customs' he deemed irreconcilable with God's will for society. In the company of others, Woolman felt that God 'opened my heart amongst the people' in a way that promoted God's will on the earth.⁸¹ Woolman's discernment of divine revelation resulted

⁷⁵ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 268.

⁷⁶ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 268.

⁷⁷ Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 149-150.

⁷⁸ In 1770, Woolman had a vision he thought revealed the oppression and evil of the silver-mining industry. That vision is explored in 4.1.3, but the appropriateness of silver dinnerware had been on his mind for some time by that point. Around the time of that vision, Woolman wrote an unpublished statement against the use of silver vessels describing the 'concern' about silver he had felt of 'late years'. In 1772, correspondence among British Quakers reflecting on Woolman's travels in England demonstrates that he had abstained from the use of silver in the last year of his life. John Woolman, 'Statement on the Use of Silver Vessels', A.D.S. Laminated, n.d., Swarthmore College, Friends Historical Library; Cadbury, *John Woolman in England*, 101-102.

⁷⁹ John Woolman's Letter to a Friend, 9th Day of 7th Month, 1769, in *Friends Miscellany: Being a Collection of Essays and Fragments, Biographical, Religious, Epistolary, Narrative, and Historical ...*, ed. John Comly and Isaac Comly, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Printed for the editors by J. Richards, 1834), 6-7.

⁸⁰ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 443.

⁸¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 73.

in outward actions. His message concerning the governance of Christ over individual behaviour and social structures was the content of his prophetic message. Woolman attempted, for example, to dissuade Quakers from slave ownership based on his discernment of God's instructive will:

...in the love of Truth [I] felt my way open to labour with some noted Friends who kept Negroes. And as I was favoured to keep to the root and endeavoured to discharge what I believed was required of me, I found inward peace therein, from time to time, and thankfulness of heart to the Lord, who was graciously pleased to be a guide to me.⁸²

It is essential to note that the proclamation of Woolman's message originated from discernment of divine revelation, signified by such terms as 'love of Truth', 'way open', 'keep to the root', 'discharge what...was required' and 'guide'.⁸³ Thus, while he proclaimed that God intervened in world affairs directly, he also believed that God spoke and intervened through *him*, as he demonstrated the alternative ordering of Christ's government in practical ways.⁸⁴

3.2.1 Embodying God's Kingdom

This sub-section argues that Woolman believed God's revelation required human submission to the divine intentions for societal organisation, after which, the divine intentions could be enacted by the faithful in historical time. In a 1755 Epistle concerning the hostilities between England and France,⁸⁵ Woolman claimed that God's authority and governance reorientated human priorities and allegiances.⁸⁶ Rather than a policy directed by a nationalist mindset and the contrivances of political leaders,

⁸² Woolman, 'Journal', 117.

⁸³ Woolman, 'Journal', 117.

⁸⁴ See 1.4.

⁸⁵ See 1.2.3

⁸⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 48.

Woolman called on colonists to 'cease from those national contests productive of misery and bloodshed, and submit our cause to him, the Most High...'⁸⁷ Humanity, Woolman proclaimed, was to be a partner in the divine work God had started and establish the rule of Christ on earth, which, in this case, meant absolute dependence on God rather than being embroiled in the wars between human governments.⁸⁸ Woolman renounced participation in the 'national contests' of the French and Indian War (1754-1763)⁸⁹ because he believed that submission to God eradicated the need for imperial ventures. In that state in which absolute loyalty was given to God alone, the eschaton had already begun because the world was already ruled by Christ and the priorities of heaven were already touching down on earth.⁹⁰

Years later, during his 1772 passage to England, Woolman decried what he saw as a pervasive greed-based economy. He felt that 'love of money' blinded others to God's will and hindered the theogico-social vision.⁹¹ This historical occasion was very different from that of 1755 above, but reinforces the consistency of his prophetic mission. In both cases, he made the case for specific behaviours based on their fidelity to a theogico-social vision of God's activity in the world:

Now under this exercise a sense of the desire of outward gain prevailing amongst us hath felt grievous, and a strong call to the professed followers of Christ *hath* been raised in me that all may take heed, lest through loving this present world they be found in a continued neglect of duty with respect to a faithful labour for a reformation.

Silence as to every motion proceeding from the love of money, and an humble waiting upon God to know his will concerning us, hath now appeared necessary. He alone is able to strengthen us to dig deep...that

⁸⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 48.

⁸⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 48.

⁸⁹ See 1.2.3.

⁹⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 48.

⁹¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 171.

pure universal love may shine forth in our proceedings.⁹²

Since God 'alone' was the true source of strength, Woolman believed ship owners should not push their sailors too hard and parents should not send their sons to learn the trade of a sailor, even though it could provide an income.⁹³ To do so would violate the 'reformation'⁹⁴ and impede God's purposes.⁹⁵ Thus, Woolman proclaimed a way of living in the world which meant 'silence' to social 'customs' contrary to God's will, such as the luxury trade of the transatlantic marketplace, but based on the direct, unimpeded revelation of God's will for society. He wrote that, as people responded to God's intentions, they could 'dig deep' into God's presence so that 'pure universal love' would be enacted in world occurrence through them.⁹⁶

Woolman believed that, if society adhered to God's revelation and submitted to the divine intentions, God would provide and humanity would experience the most fulfilling way of being human: 'if we obediently attend to that wisdom which is from above, our gracious Father will open a way for us...'⁹⁷ Thus, commerce motivated by material prosperity was evidence that ship owners and captains had not submitted their cause to God, but were, in fact, guided by the false 'spirit' of wealth.⁹⁸ Likewise, Woolman encouraged colonists to be aware of their motives for travel, even in the case of the seemingly innocent desire for news, and only to travel as directed by God.⁹⁹ Instead, Woolman called colonists to 'attend to the pure light' and so 'feel that purifying

⁹² Woolman, 'Journal', 171.

⁹³ Woolman, 'Journal', 170-171. Emphasis is Woolman's.

⁹⁴ See also, 4.1.2.

⁹⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 171.

⁹⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 171.

⁹⁷ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 265.

⁹⁸ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 256-257.

⁹⁹ Woolman, 'Serious Considerations on Trade', 399.

power which prepares the heart to have fellowship with Christ', which was more important than news from abroad.¹⁰⁰ In other words, Woolman believed that the divine revelation was so direct as to make claims on the minutia of human affairs.¹⁰¹ Here, in a state under the governance of Christ, ships only set sail when directed by 'the will of the Heavenly Father'¹⁰² and transatlantic commerce itself was only undertaken by God's decree.¹⁰³ To that end, a small number of sailors who worked moderately was necessary, but an economy founded on obedience to God's revelation, restored the world to God's intentions and upended the practices and motives of the greed-based *status quo*. Prophetic proclamations like this one reassured God's alternative societal organisation in the face of what Woolman determined to be apostate social structures.

Under God's direct influence, Woolman claimed, humanity's actions would be transformed in a way consistent with God's intentions for world affairs:¹⁰⁴

so far as his love influences our minds, so far we become interested in his workmanship and feel a desire to take hold of every opportunity to lessen the distresses of the afflicted and increase the happiness of the creation. Here we have a prospect of one common interest from which our own is inseparable - that to turn all the treasures we possess into the channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives. ¹⁰⁵

For Woolman, the degree of 'resignation' to God's will and love was linked to the degree to which human affairs corresponded to divine purposes, 'the channel of universal love'.¹⁰⁶ In that state of obedience, the 'business' of the faithful was God's work, not the competing influences of greed and wealth accumulation.¹⁰⁷ It was a 'channel' of human

¹⁰⁰ Woolman, 'Serious Considerations on Trade', 399.

¹⁰¹ Woolman, 'Serious Considerations on Trade', 400.

¹⁰² Woolman, 'Journal', 166.

¹⁰³ Woolman, 'Serious Considerations on Trade', 399.

¹⁰⁴ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 241.

¹⁰⁵ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 241.

¹⁰⁶ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 241.

¹⁰⁷ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 241.

action in which increased faithfulness expanded God's universalised love, 'one common interest', to the advancement of God's reign.¹⁰⁸

Woolman's propheticism was rooted not only in the reforms he advocated, but primarily in the theological state in which certain behaviours were no longer tenable. He desired that Quakers and colonists be 'inwardly acquainted' with God's revealed will because 'the peaceable kingdom' on earth was extending.¹⁰⁹ This inward acquaintance had very practical outward consequences because it subverted idolatrous notions of self which resulted in oppression, war and greed.¹¹⁰ God literally ruled God's kingdom through the faithful and, through their redeemed actions in obedience to the divine will, God's intended purposes would be fulfilled.

Humanity was destined¹¹¹ to enact the theogico-social vision as they were transformed into a state of consistency with the divine will, which reordered social priorities. Woolman said of this vision: 'the more we are redeemed from selfishness and brought into that love in which there is no respecter of persons, the more we are prepared to desire and labour for universal harmony among surfeiting wealth.'¹¹² To the extent that the individual was 'resigned' to God's universalising love, God's harmonious society came to be and 'healing and restoration is experienced.'¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 241.

¹⁰⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 49.

¹¹⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 49.

¹¹¹ This 'destiny' is to be understood as both a threat and an invitation. Woolman believed God was actively revealing God's self for the purpose of inviting the world into the government of Christ (see 4.1), but human arrogance and rejection of God's intentions would not be allowed to continue forever, either (see 4.3.2). In the end, God's will would be done.

¹¹² Woolman, 'Notes and commentaries on A. Benezet's A Caution and Warning to Great Britain', 96.

¹¹³ Woolman wrote:

A care is now reviving in many places that this veil may be yet further removed, and that this disorder may be searched to the bottom; and my concern is that we may not only bear in mind that the Negroes have been a suffering people under us as a civil society, but that we may in true humiliation feel for that pure influence which alone is able to guide us in the way where healing and restoration is experienced.

3.2.2 Evangelisation: The Prophet's Life and the Power of 'Example'

Woolman designated a human behaviour or a 'testimony'¹¹⁴ that witnessed to God's intentions for the world an 'example'.¹¹⁵ I argue that the outward, temporal, prophetic manifestations of his apocalyptic theology were intended to encourage others to change their ways and, he believed, contributed to the spread of God's kingdom.¹¹⁶ In this sense, 'example' must be understood as evangelisation.¹¹⁷ Woolman believed the 'example' of the faithful to carry conversionary prospects as they publicly embodied God's intentions for society. To this end, his efforts in the reformation of PYM sought to create both a more inclusive theology of God's kingdom, calling those outside Quaker circles to enter into the government of Christ, while also to call his own religious community to embody the theologically-social vision which was the destiny of people of

Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 270.

¹¹⁴ Birkel explains that 'to John Woolman, the Quaker testimonies were the outgrowth of the transformed life.' Birkel, *Near Sympathy*, 9.

¹¹⁵ However, practical social embodiments of God's perceived intentions for the world with the purpose of converting others was not unique to Woolman. Calvert argues that evangelisation and 'proselytization' were a part of Quaker protest from the beginning. While early Quakers certainly wanted to clear themselves from the implications of sinful activity, their overarching objective was to 'set an example for others to follow, to testify to God's law through social and political reform.' Early Friends, Spencer argues, 'united the political and missionary movement on a grand scale...' In this way, Quakers performed public acts of dissent to proclaim God's intentions for society with the intention that non-Quakers would join with that public witness. Further research is needed to compare both the methodology and theology of evangelisation between the first generation of Quakers and the reformers in the 18th century. Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism*, 9, 37; Carole Dale Spencer, 'Holiness: the Quaker Way of Perfection', in *The Creation of Quaker Theory: Insider Perspectives*, ed. Pink Dandelion (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 156.

¹¹⁶ See 4.1.1 and 4.1.2.

¹¹⁷ The concept of evangelisation, according to Darrell Guder, should be distinguished from evangelism in that the emphasis of evangelisation is holistic, active, derives from divine commissioning and assumes the agent is also being formed by the evangelising activity. Evangelism, in contrast, is focused on methodology, one activity among many that a person can pick up or put down as she or he sees fit. Evangelism, a modern concept, assumes that the agent distributes preconceived religious information to the receiver without any form of mutuality, or continual prophetic formation. Woolman did not set out to do acts of evangelism as a set-apart activity unrelated to his larger theologically-social vision. Rather, he believed people could be 'exampled' into God's kingdom as he participated and disseminated the divine will. Woolman's propheticism addressed the specific social challenges of his day, such as slavery, war and economics, with the intention of evangelising 18th century society with the theological content of God's revelation for human affairs. Darrell Guder, *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. Eerdmans, 2000), 25-26.

all religious backgrounds.¹¹⁸ As I demonstrate below, Woolman reached beyond Quaker circles.¹¹⁹ He believed that, as God's mouthpiece, he proclaimed an alternative society and, through his 'example', God's will for society would spread. He paid particular attention to the 'example' provided for youth because he thought they were so easily influenced one way or the other. If the world was to be recreated, he argued, traditional parental concerns for the material prosperity of children should be replaced by a concern that youth should be instructed in God's purposes. As Couser argues, Woolman's theologically-social concerns 'clearly transcended tribal considerations, but his role was to extend rather than to ignore or denounce the concerns of the tribe.'¹²⁰

Woolman's writings were tools of evangelisation both within and outside Quaker circles. His first two antislavery essays were written to 'every denomination' and made

¹¹⁸ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 481. See also 2.2.1 on the 'true' Church.

¹¹⁹ One of the ways we know that Woolman intended to advance certain spiritual ideals was through his lending library. In his ledger, he kept a list of 'books lent', the only record of his reading available besides what is referenced in his other writings. He lent out books that included the mystics of previous centuries and Quaker spiritual autobiographical writings. Altman contends that 'Woolman's reading deepened his spirituality and made clearer to him the means of accomplishing what he felt the Lord required.' Woolman regarded his library high enough that he took pains to recover lent books, as he signed his name in various places in the books, including on the last page, to remind the borrower to return it once the borrower had finished. Plank argues that Woolman lent his books to the customers of his shop and that the lending of Quaker books to the townspeople had an evangelistic intention. Woolman demonstrated a desire to draw people to authors he identified as members of God's faithful, such as 1) mystics, like Thomas à Kempis; 2) early Quakers, William Dewsbury, Francis Howgill, Elizabeth Stirredge, Thomas Story, Thomas Wilson, Robert Barclay, John Fothergill, William Penn and the Quaker hagiography of Samuel Sewel; and, 3) martyrs, like John Huss. Woolman believed these mystics, early Quakers and martyrs demonstrated the obedience to God's revelation that was central to his concept of faithfulness and desired fellow colonists to be spiritually formed, according to their 'pious example.' Woolman learned about John Huss from John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*. His list of books lent does not indicate that he owned a copy of Foxe's ubiquitous tome, but the fact that Woolman quoted from it multiple times suggests strongly that it was a prized resource and one to which he wished to draw attention. Woolman, 'Journal', 76, 118-119; Altman, 'John Woolman's Reading', 118; Woolman, 'Considerations on Keeping Negroes, Part Second', 232; Woolman, 'Ledger B'; see, Woolman's copy of Jakob Böhme, *Jacob Behmen's Theosophick Philosophy Unfolded*, ed. Edmund Taylor (London: Printed for Tho. Salusbury, 1691), 259 in the Haverford College Library, Special Collections; Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 78. See, also, the discussion of the main influences on Woolman in 5.1.

¹²⁰ Couser, *American Autobiography*, 38.

no specific reference to Quakers.¹²¹ Benezet sent Woolman's essays to the English antislavery pioneer Granville Sharp.¹²² Woolman's essays were in the mix with other antislavery sources of the late 18th century.¹²³ Plank notes that Woolman's 1770 essay, *Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind*, was widely distributed.¹²⁴ The essay was sent in bulk to meetings in New York, Rhode Island and Massachusetts to be distributed to young people, servants and new settlers.¹²⁵

Woolman also encountered non-Quakers in his daily life around Mt. Holly and on ministry journeys.¹²⁶ For example, he attempted to convince the owner of a raucous tavern to consider the sinful corruptions occurring at his establishment.¹²⁷ He attempted to dissuade locals from attending a magic show at the neighbourhood public house 'in the fear of the Lord and laboured to convince them that thus assembling to see those tricks or sleights-of-hand, and bestowing their money to support men who in that capacity were of no use in the world, was contrary to the nature of the Christian religion.'¹²⁸ He held a meeting for inquirers in a tavern in Brunswick, 'a town in which none of our Society dwells. The room was full and the people quiet.'¹²⁹ He ministered to recent converts¹³⁰ and evangelised sailors on the journey to England: 'from a motion of love sundry times taken opportunities with one alone and in a free conversation laboured to turn their minds toward the fear of the Lord.'¹³¹ Woolman drew crowds of

¹²¹ Woolman, *Considerations on Keeping Negroes*; Woolman, *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes*.

¹²² Cadbury, *John Woolman in England*, 66–67.

¹²³ Cadbury, *John Woolman in England*, 66–67.

¹²⁴ Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 50–51.

¹²⁵ Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 50–51.

¹²⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 32, 34–35, 138, 166.

¹²⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 32.

¹²⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 138.

¹²⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 34–35.

¹³⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 41–42.

¹³¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 166.

Quakers and non-Quakers when he appeared in the ministry, probably, in some part, due to his unique appearance and being dressed in natural coloured garments and as he walked long distances.¹³²

Woolman desired to evangelise colonial society not only in the avoidance of evil behaviour, but, positively stated, in particular theological truths. In other words, Woolman's social reforms were an embodiment of his vision of God's intentions for human affairs. The outward ascetics represented, in a physical way, theological content and Woolman believed his ministry engaged with the world rather than retreated from it.¹³³

Perhaps the ascetic practice that occasioned Woolman the most turmoil and ostracism, but that he understood to be a practical manifestation of the new order God was bringing about, was that of wearing undyed clothes.¹³⁴ Woolman viewed his clothing as a visible pronouncement of divine purposes and a chastisement of apostasy.¹³⁵ As he walked through England, in 1772, he noted dye running in the street of an industrial town and wrote:

To hide dirt in our garments appears opposite to real cleanliness. To wash garments and keep them sweet, this appears cleanly. Through giving way to hiding dirt in our garments, a spirit which would cover that which is disagreeable is strengthened. Real cleanliness becometh a holy people, but hiding that which is not clean by colouring our garments appears contrary

¹³² Cadbury, *John Woolman in England*, 18, 91; Woolman, 'The Journal of John Woolman', 313 fn. 1.

¹³³ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 210.

¹³⁴ Woolman struggled over the decision to begin wearing undyed clothing because:
the apprehension of being looked upon as one affecting singularity felt uneasy to me.
And here I had occasion to consider that things, though small in themselves, being clearly enjoined by divine authority became great things to us, and I trusted the Lord would support me in the trials that might attend singularity while that singularity was only for his sake.

Woolman, 'Journal', 121.

¹³⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 120.

to the sweetness of sincerity.¹³⁶

This opposition to dyed clothing seems obsessive. However, when one considers Woolman's mission for complete theoglico-social transformation, his resistance to dyed clothing becomes less obscure. Woolman believed that the true-self in God arose out of 'resignation' to God in all things. This state in God stood in opposition to Quakers and other colonists, who claimed to be well-esteemed members of their religious groups on the basis that they rigidly adhered to its precepts outwardly. Woolman thought that following tribal customs, like wearing traditional Quaker clothing,¹³⁷ fell far short of a state of union with God and it was that state in God that mattered.

Wearing dyed clothing allowed people to adorn clothes that were dirty, but outwardly appeared clean, to hide the true state of their clothing.¹³⁸ Likewise, being in the habit of covering over one's true state obstructed the necessary transformation God intended. When Woolman wore undyed clothing, he broadcasted this theology; it made visible the difference between sincerity and lies. In fact, Woolman wanted his attire to be emulated, Plank argues.¹³⁹ Woolman demonstrated a fundamental desire for others to know a state of 'real cleanness' in God.¹⁴⁰ Wearing undyed clothing, he thought, was an

¹³⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 190.

¹³⁷ William Penn wrote that Quakers should dress plainly, not to receive attention: 'Chuse [sic] thy Cloaths [sic] by thine own eye, not anothers. The more simple and plain they are, the better.' While conformity to accepted standards of dress was prescribed among Quakers, there were very few cases of discipline on those grounds (comprising only 0.1% of total Quaker delinquencies 1748-1783, according to official records). However, Marietta notes that wealthy Quaker merchants were known to indulge their tastes in attire. Thus, while Woolman was unlikely to face official PYM discipline for his choice in clothes, he was nonetheless transgressing a community value and, perhaps, grieved at the prospect of associating himself with the contingency of apathetic Quakers much of his reforms were directed against. Amelia M. Gummere, *The Quaker: a Study in Costume* (Philadelphia: Ferris & Leach, 1901), 15-16; William Penn, *Some Fruits of Solitude* (London: Headley Brothers, 1906), 38; Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 6, 22-23. Woolman, 'Journal', 120-121.

¹³⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 190.

¹³⁹ Plank, 'First Person in Antislavery Literature', 72.

¹⁴⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 190.

act of faithfulness, but also challenged colonial standards of piety and proclaimed a vision of society that established absolute dependency on God's governance as the true measurement of faithfulness.

Even political leaders, Woolman believed, would be confronted with God's revealed will and transformed according to God's purposes through faithful example. He argued that, if Quakers acquiesced to civil leaders who collected taxes for war, 'our Cheerfull complyance [*sic*] looks a little like denying them that help which I have thought...our Gracious Father Intends for them through us.'¹⁴¹ On the other hand, he believed that civil disobedience would transform the hearts of civil authorities and colonial society: 'To meekly Suffer by our Lawfull Rulers Seems to me like placeing [*sic*] the Light on the Candlestick and adding our mite to help forward toward that mountain where they shall no more hurt or destroy.'¹⁴² The prophet Isaiah talked about a mountain where humanity would 'not hurt nor destroy', which was characterised by the whole world being 'full of the knowledge of the LORD' and where wolf and lamb 'shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat.'¹⁴³ Woolman used this scripture to describe his theogico-social vision of the peaceable kingdom, which he thought corresponded to God's intentions for the world.¹⁴⁴ Evangelisation was part of the process through which the eschaton was realising, and civil disobedience, Woolman believed, when consistent with God's intentions for humanity, was a means of advancing society towards its eschatological fulfillment.¹⁴⁵

Thus, Woolman claimed that prophetic action – whether in the type of clothing

¹⁴¹ Woolman, 'Document, unsigned, supposed to have been written by John Woolman', 3.

¹⁴² Woolman, 'Document, unsigned, supposed to have been written by John Woolman', 3.

¹⁴³ Is.11:9 and 65:25, respectively.

¹⁴⁴ See 4.1.1.

¹⁴⁵ Woolman, 'Document, unsigned, supposed to have been written by John Woolman', 3.

he wore or civil disobedience – which was consistent with the divine will, reached 'the witness in others' and advanced God's purposes for the Church:¹⁴⁶

though there are different ways of thinking amongst us in some particulars, yet if we mutually kept to that spirit and power which crucifies to the world, which teaches us to be content with things really needful and to avoid all superfluities, giving up our hearts to fear and serve the Lord, true unity may still be preserved amongst us; and that if such who were at times under sufferings on account of some scruples of conscience kept low and humble and in their conduct in life manifested a spirit of true charity, it would be more likely to reach the witness in others, and be of more service in the church, than if their sufferings were attended with a contrary spirit and conduct.¹⁴⁷

As one lived faithfully, even though such faithfulness might entail suffering, Woolman claimed, God would teach one the right manner of living. That witness to God's purposes would reach God's 'principle' in others and be a service to the Church.

Woolman was not only concerned with the act of public witness, but the 'spirit' that attended it.¹⁴⁸ He noted that a public witness carried on 'in true charity' was more likely to have a positive impact than one carried on in a 'contrary spirit'.¹⁴⁹

However, Woolman felt that the Quaker public witness could both hold up the government of Christ for the world, on the positive side, or, in disobedience, spread a negative witness. Quaker politicians 'putting laws in force which are not agreeable to the purity of righteousness', hurt the Quaker witness.¹⁵⁰ 'The standard of pure righteousness is not lifted up to the people by us, as a Society, in that clearness which it might have been had we been so faithful to the teaching of Christ as we ought to have been.'¹⁵¹ In contrast to the negative example of some Quaker politicians, Woolman believed the

¹⁴⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 98.

¹⁴⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 98.

¹⁴⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 98.

¹⁴⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 98.

¹⁵⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 154.

¹⁵¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 153-154.

purity of Christ's government hath often been opened in my understanding... having felt in the openings of universal love that where a people, convinced of the inward teaching of Christ, are active in putting laws in execution which they see are not consistent with pure wisdom, it hath a necessary tendency to bring dimness over their minds.¹⁵²

Under the influence of Christ's direct government, the faithful rebuked that 'dimness' which led people astray from 'pure wisdom'.¹⁵³ As Woolman viewed social and political affairs from within 'Christ's government', he felt the apostasy of many revealed to him and the damage such apostasy entailed for others.¹⁵⁴

Transformed by the inward presence of Christ, 'that divine voice which gives a clear and certain sound', Quakers could become 'patterns' of faithfulness, according to God's intentions for human affairs.¹⁵⁵ Woolman believed this new state in God to be established on a 'sure foundation', which would not be diluted or manipulated by changing cultural assumptions, but, rather, would be centred on God's immutability and, therefore, eternal and perfect.¹⁵⁶ As Quakers followed Christ's revelation faithfully, he claimed, God 'will purify a people and work through them in repairing the waste places'.¹⁵⁷ Human acts of faithfulness were thus practical actions which set an example through which God advanced God's purposes and restored the creation to its ultimate destiny.¹⁵⁸ In this way, the faithful were made participants in the evangelisation of the

¹⁵² Woolman, 'Journal', 154.

¹⁵³ Woolman, 'Journal', 154.

¹⁵⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 154.

¹⁵⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 184.

¹⁵⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 184.

¹⁵⁷ Woolman, 'Epistle of 1768 from PYM to London Yearly Meeting', 268.

¹⁵⁸ Elsewhere, Woolman indicated that power of example was a participation in God's will that spread God's purposes, this-worldly transformational acts that aligned humanity with God's ultimate design:

But where people are sincerely devoted to follow Christ and dwell under the influence of his Holy Spirit, their stability and firmness through a divine blessing is at time like dew on the tender plants round about them, and the weightiness of their spirits secretly works on the minds of others; and in this condition, through the spreading influence of divine love they feel a care over the flock and way is opened for maintaining good order in the Society. And though we meet with opposition from another spirit, yet as there is a dwelling in meekness, feeling our spirits subject and moving only in the gentle,

world: 'that none of us may be a stumbling-block in the way of others, but may so walk that our conduct may reach the pure witness in the hearts of such who are not in profession with us.'¹⁵⁹

The spread of his theogico-social vision would be the result of God's intervening will in world affairs. However, Woolman believed that part of God's intervention happened through *him* as he attested to the transformation he had experienced in his conversion and called colonists to remake the world according to the revelation he claimed to know. Since his vision originated in an *inward* transformation and ongoing state in Christ, so the *outward* activity and proclamation of the redeemed simultaneously constituted the expansion of God's kingdom on earth. As he challenged cultural assumptions of wealth accumulation and power, he called colonists to a way of living that embodied the apocalypse of God's purposes in the world.

3.2.3 Simplicity: 'Singleness of Heart'

Woolman believed there was a stark difference between the God-centred life, where all outward pursuits corresponded to God's direct governance, what Woolman called 'simplicity',¹⁶⁰ and the self-centred life that rejected God's purposes. The minutiae

peaceable wisdom, the inward reward of quietness will be greater than all our difficulties. Where the pure life is kept to and meetings of discipline are held in the authority of it, we find by experience that they are comfortable and tend to the health of the body.

Woolman believed that discipline was essential to the perfection of the religious community and through union to Christ the community could influence the people around them. In that state of consistency to God's purposes, where the inward spiritual state in God transformed human affairs, Woolman believed evangelisation occurred and the 'spreading influence of divine love' prevailed over evil and established the 'gentle, peaceable wisdom' of God through faithfulness. Woolman, 'Journal', 68.

¹⁵⁹ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 475–476.

¹⁶⁰ John Woolman, 'John Woolman's Letter to a Friend, 9th Day of 7th Month, 1769', in *Friends Miscellany: Being a Collection of Essays and Fragments, Biographical, Religious, Epistolary, Narrative, and Historical ...*, ed. John Comly and Isaac Comly, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Printed for the editors by J. Richards, 1834), 9.

of individual decisions were connected to larger systemic evils which violated 'divine order.'¹⁶¹ Even the 'least degree' of luxury was connected not only to oppressive economic conditions in which labourers were paid little for unrewarding work, but also to the rejection of God's purposes for human affairs and God's direct governance over them.¹⁶² To participate in luxury consumption, even second-hand, such as benefiting from the hospitality slave-system when staying with others,¹⁶³ was, for Woolman, to live as if God had not directed otherwise. The disparity between God's intentions and apostasy represented a form of spiritual warfare in the world. This battle between good and evil, though, was not limited to supernatural beings, like angels and demons; it was fought between God's human agents and the agents of greed.¹⁶⁴

The daily decisions of the faithful, Woolman believed, brought God's purposes to fruition.¹⁶⁵ To 'possess nothing but what pertains to [God's] family...they learn contentment in being disposed of according to his will who, being omnipotent and always mindful of his children, causeth all things to work for their good.'¹⁶⁶ For Woolman, to be 'draw[n]...off' greed was to 'break the yoke of oppression' and to struggle on behalf of God, who provided 'strength and support in a time of outward affliction.'¹⁶⁷ This theology of simplicity stood 'in opposition to the customs of the times', which Woolman believed rejected absolute focus on God's will in favour of

¹⁶¹ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 246-247.

¹⁶² 'To labour too hard or cause others to do so, that we may live conformable to customs which Christ our Redeemer contradicted by his example in the days of his flesh, and which are contrary to divine order, is to manure a soil for the propagating of an evil seed in the earth.' Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 247.

¹⁶³ Woolman, 'Journal', 60-61.

¹⁶⁴ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 247.

¹⁶⁵ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 255.

¹⁶⁶ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 255.

¹⁶⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 148.

prestige and pride.¹⁶⁸

Outside of the divine will, human activity tended towards the 'ruin' and oppression of those involved.¹⁶⁹ In contrast to the spirit that leads to 'ruin', Woolman believed, that, in the power of God's activity through human agents, the world and its resources were rightly ordered and 'a fresh and living sense of divine love was spread over my mind, in which I had a renewed prospect of the nature of that wisdom from above which leads to a right use of all gifts both spiritual and temporal, and gives content therein.'¹⁷⁰ The integration of 'spiritual' and 'temporal' in the activity of 'divine love' resulted in a complete reorientation of priorities, which stood in contrast to abusive practices, such as the exploitation of Native Americans and other marginalised people in the 18th century.¹⁷¹

Woolman's conversion¹⁷² was not *only* spiritual. He believed it to have been a holistic conversion out of which a new pattern of living and new values were revealed to him and bestowed upon him. When he considered what to do for employment as a young man, he described how God's presence had made a change in his values: 'My mind through the power of Truth was in a good degree weaned from the desire of outward greatness, and I was learning to be content with real conveniences that were not costly, so that a way of life free from much entanglements appeared best for me, though the income was small.'¹⁷³ The simplified life that Woolman held up as the ideal of faithfulness went beyond wariness of consumer goods; it originated out of a concern to

¹⁶⁸ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 247.

¹⁶⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 128.

¹⁷⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 142.

¹⁷¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 142.

¹⁷² See 2.2.1.

¹⁷³ Woolman, 'Journal', 35.

be liberated for God's purposes. To be 'weaned' from a desire for prestige and the accumulation of wealth was, for Woolman, a transformation into a state that repudiated sin and conquered the systemic forces which vied with God for governance of world affairs.¹⁷⁴ This conviction was just as much a sense of deliverance from excessive preoccupation with material objects as it was a transformation to unity with the divine voice: 'There was a care on my mind to so pass my time as to things outward that nothing might hinder me from the most steady attention to the voice of the True Shepherd.'¹⁷⁵

True simplicity was more than a disdain for material excess, it was 'a single Eye to' God that originated out of an inward focus on divine revelation.¹⁷⁶ In 1758, Woolman described the importance of absolute devotion to Christ by God's agents in order to 'promote' God's purposes and ultimate design in the world:¹⁷⁷

Friends were incited to constancy in supporting the testimony of Truth and reminded of the necessity which the disciples of Christ are under to attend principally to his business, as he is pleased to open it to us, and to be particularly careful to have our minds redeemed from the love of wealth, to have our outward affairs in as little room as may be, that so no temporal concerns may entangle our affections or hinder us from diligently following the dictates of Truth, in labouring to promote the pure spirit of meekness and heavenly-mindedness amongst the children of men in these days of calamity and distress, wherein God is visiting our land with his just judgments.¹⁷⁸

On one hand, Woolman claimed that the faithful could know God's redemption on earth so as to follow 'the dictates of Truth' and labour to advance God's revelation.¹⁷⁹ To this

¹⁷⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 35.

¹⁷⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 35.

¹⁷⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 390.

¹⁷⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 95.

¹⁷⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 95.

¹⁷⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 95.

end, the activity of the faithful must be confined to what God is 'pleased to open to us' and no more.¹⁸⁰ This theology of simplicity, then, was intended to advance God's governance over human affairs, an overt rejection of 'temporal concerns that may entangle our affections'.¹⁸¹ On the other hand, the activity of the faithful to eschew such entanglements from their own lives participated in the defeat of apostasy, for which 'God is visiting our land with his just judgments'.¹⁸² Thus, God and the faithful worked together for the establishment of the divine reign. God's judgment through specific temporal events, such as war and persecution,¹⁸³ were co-joined with the enactment of divine purposes through the faithful in overthrowing rebellion to God's leadership.

This conflict can be described as theogico-social warfare because in both temporal and spiritual realms it destroyed the foundations of opposition to God's will and replaced it with a vision of a new redeemed humanity:¹⁸⁴

To labour for an establishment in divine love where the mind is disentangled from the power of darkness is the great business of man's life. Collecting of riches, covering the body with fine-wrought, costly apparel, and having magnificent furniture operates against universal love and tends to feed self, that to desire these belongs not to the children of the Light.¹⁸⁵

In the prophetic mold, Woolman challenged his contemporaries to replace tame theologies of religious performance and luxury consumption with a subversive theology that declared war on the fabric, ethics and assumptions of the transatlantic marketplace.¹⁸⁶ Woolman intertwined explicitly theological concerns for the liberation

¹⁸⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 95.

¹⁸¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 95.

¹⁸² Woolman, 'Journal', 95.

¹⁸³ See 4.3.

¹⁸⁴ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 250.

¹⁸⁵ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 250.

¹⁸⁶ Elsewhere, Woolman proclaimed that through a deep spiritual struggle, individuals and nations entrenched in greed and the slave-based economy could be relieved by God and, in absolute trust in

of the true-self from sin with the temporal and material because he could not separate the two into distinct spheres. Woolman's challenge to 'labour' for the 'establishment' of God's love in the human heart was, simultaneously and authentically, a struggle for the establishment of God's purposes in all aspects of human behaviour.¹⁸⁷

In an essay, Woolman reflected on Jesus' admonition to 'Lay not up for yourselves Treasures here on Earth'.¹⁸⁸ Woolman expounded that those who dwelled in Christ were capable of understanding and obeying Jesus' message, and, moreover, could participate in it:¹⁸⁹

Now in the pure Light, this Language is understood, for in the Love of Christ there is no Respect of Persons; and while we abide in his Love, we live not to *ourselves*, but to him who died for us. And as we are thus united in Spirit to Christ, we are engaged to labour in promoting that Work in the Earth for which he suffer'd.¹⁹⁰

Instead of calling Quakers and colonists to obedience to tribal customs of dress, speech, or culturally defined mannerisms, Woolman advocated a state in God's will in which colonists were 'united' to Christ's salvific purposes.¹⁹¹ Woolman thought that humans could be motivated to acquire 'Treasures' in this life or motivated 'in promoting that Work in the Earth for which he [Christ] suffered'.¹⁹² The conflict between these two

God, could overcome 'the most exquisite difficulties':

How deeply soever men are involved in the most exquisite difficulties, sincerity of heart and upright walking before God, freely submitting to his providence, is the most sure remedy. He only is able to relieve not only persons but nations in their greatest calamities. David, in a great strait when the sense of his past error and the full expectation of an impending calamity as the reward of it were united to aggravating his distress, after some deliberation saith, "Let me fall now into the hands of the Lord, for very great are his mercies; let me not fall into the hand of man." 1 Chron. 21:13.

Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 204.

¹⁸⁷ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 250.

¹⁸⁸ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 491.

¹⁸⁹ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 491.

¹⁹⁰ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 491.

¹⁹¹ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 491; see also, 2.1 and 4.2.

¹⁹² Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 491.

motivations was at the core of Woolman's theology and its social embodiment.

Woolman decried self-absorption because he thought it violated God's sovereignty and lordship over the created world. The desire for possessions and wealth demonstrated a lack of trust in God and the idolatry of self.¹⁹³

Thus, Woolman encouraged his contemporaries to live in such a state of faithfulness and trust that inward/outward dichotomies were entirely dissolved and the individual stood fully 'resigned' to God in all things: 'Look, my dear Friends, to divine providence, and follow in simplicity that exercise of body, that plainness and frugality, which true wisdom leads to; so may you be preserved from those dangers which attend such who are aiming at outward ease and greatness.'¹⁹⁴ Out of this state of trust, the individual 'with a single eye to the leadings of [the] Holy Spirit' could organise their lives around God's will and live 'conformable to the Simplicity that is in Christ, where we faithfully serve our God without distraction.'¹⁹⁵ Woolman believed that absolute devotion to God unclouded by sinful desires, what he called the 'single eye' to God, would redeem human affairs:¹⁹⁶ 'While the Eye is single, the whole Body is full of Light.'¹⁹⁷ On the other hand, the individual cluttered with competing distractions and idolatry would be unable to discern God's purposes: 'While our minds are prepossessed in favour of customs distinguishable from perfect purity, we are in danger of not attending with singleness to that Light which opens to our view the nature of universal

¹⁹³ In this essay, Woolman challenges 'they who have Plenty' to demonstrate love for the poor among them through moderating wealth accumulation and consumption of luxury items. Woolman believed the wealthy exploited their workers for their own personal gain, in defiance of Christ's command: 'Lay not up for yourselves Treasures here on Earth.' Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 491.

¹⁹⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 69.

¹⁹⁵ Woolman, 'John Woolman's Letter to a Friend,' ed. John Comly and Isaac Comly, vol. 1, 9.

¹⁹⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 68–69.

¹⁹⁷ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 247.

righteousness.¹⁹⁸ Far from pushing non-Quakers away in a world-hating and world-fearing insular spirituality, Woolman believed that this type of simplicity integrated social and theological witness in a way that advanced Christ's purposes, evangelised the apostate and agitated against systemic sin:

The great Shepherd of the Sheep I believe is preparing some to example the people in a plain Simple way of living, and I feel a tender care that thee and I may abide in that, where our light may shine clear, and nothing pertaining to us have any tendency to Strengthen those customs which are distinguishable from the Truth as it is in Jesus.¹⁹⁹

Enabled by Christ's 'strength', the soul 'in whom Christ governs' becomes 'a being sacred to God'.²⁰⁰ In that state of faithfulness, Christ moved and influenced one to action, so that one could 'take heed that no weakness in conforming to expensive, unwise, and hard-hearted customs, gendering to discord and strife, be given way to'.²⁰¹ In 'perfect simplicity' the faithful would 'walk as [Christ] walked' and be a positive example for others.²⁰²

3.2.4 The Chaotic State of Sin: 'to Alienate the Minds of People from their Truest Interest'

This leads us to a discussion of Woolman's harmatology. Walls argues that eschatology has a lot to do with theodicy and sin because eschatology confronts the discrepancy between God's lordship over all things and a world not yet fully subjected to God's will.²⁰³ Hill draws the connection thus:

¹⁹⁸ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 260.

¹⁹⁹ Woolman, 'John Woolman's Letter to a Friend', 9.

²⁰⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 143.

²⁰¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 143.

²⁰² Woolman, 'Journal', 143.

²⁰³ Jerry Walls, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5; see 1.4.

At heart, all eschatologies are responses if not quite answers to the problem of evil...Eschatologies differ in how they conceptualize God's triumph, but they are essentially alike in asserting God's victory as the supreme reality against which all seemingly contrary realities are to be judged.²⁰⁴

This is the crux of the issue for Woolman. Individual sins were acts of rebellion against 'Pure Wisdom' and the antithesis of the 'resignation' necessary for obedience and transformation. Just as Woolman's positive theogico-social vision entailed the recreation of society, human affairs and structures according to God's direct governance, so sin was a rejection of that universal vision. Sins, then, were the behaviours and evil spirits that Woolman confronted prophetically.

In this section, I demonstrate that Woolman's harmatology was of a piece with his apocalyptic theology because he thought sin was a rejection of God's revelation. Sin entrenched the false-self in opposition to the realising kingdom of God. While Woolman believed it was possible to resist God's will for a time, he characterised this rebellion as 'confusion'. Confusion, 'bewilder[ment]'²⁰⁵ and chaos, Woolman judged, were present not only in the actions of individuals, but in structures, customs and hierarchies which originated out of an apostate state of self-love.²⁰⁶ Thus, Woolman did not only seek to modify an individual's behaviour, but to shape systemic forces and challenge apostasy at its spiritual root. 'I feel that pride is opposite to Divine love', Woolman wrote, 'and if I put forth my Strength in any employ which I know is to support pride, I feel that it has a tendency to weaken those bands which ... I have felt at times to bind and unite my Soul in a holy fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.'²⁰⁷ Sin, Woolman

²⁰⁴ Hill, *In God's Time*, 4.

²⁰⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 180.

²⁰⁶ See also, Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 40.

²⁰⁷ Woolman, 'Conversations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 465.

claimed, disconnected one from the immediacy of God's revelation and, thus, constituted the antithesis of Woolman's vision of a world under God's governance. This is so because, with God's inward principle 'being frequently and totally rejected, the mind shuts itself up in a contrary disposition.'²⁰⁸ From that state of alienation from God,²⁰⁹ Woolman believed, acts of injustice and violations of God's design for the creation ensued.²¹⁰

Woolman called outward habits, which were inconsistent with God's will for the created order and which rejected the divine revelation, 'customs'.²¹¹ While he did not specifically list everything he considered a 'custom' in any one place, he used the term to refer to slavery,²¹² silver vessels²¹³ and the trappings of luxury.²¹⁴ Sometimes, it is difficult to identify what the specific 'custom' was because there are no indicators in his writing. This fact, in itself, is informative. Woolman used the term 'custom' to signal a behaviour or habit which was sinful because it rejected the divine revelation.²¹⁵ Thus, he

²⁰⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 25.

²⁰⁹ Elsewhere, Woolman juxtaposed a state within the direct governance of Christ with a 'love of money' that opened the door to the devil's influence:

O how safe, how quiet, is that state where the soul stands in pure obedience to the voice of Christ the good Shepherd; and a watchful care maintained not to follow the voice of a Stranger! In the love of money the voice of the Stranger finds entrance. In the love of money the eye is not single to God. In the love of money the understanding is closed up against the pure counsel [*sic*] of Truth, and thus becomes darkened.

These are clearly two different states, each focused on who was to be served: Christ or the 'Stranger'. However, the most insidious effect of the dominion of the Stranger, for Woolman, was that it, in some ways, precluded attention to the divine will. In this case, 'the love of money' had dire consequences because it alienated one from God's intentions for society. Woolman, 'MS T2, Manuscript of John Woolman's Sea Journal'.

²¹⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 25.

²¹¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 119.

²¹² Woolman, 'Journal', 119.

²¹³ Woolman, 'Statement on the Use of Silver Vessels'.

²¹⁴ Woolman, 'Serious Considerations on Trade', 398.

²¹⁵ Calvert demonstrates that Quakers of the 17th and 18th centuries were suspicious of 'custom' because they equated it with a ritual which followed the letter of the law, but killed the spirit. This was true for both Quaker ecclesiology as well as for their understanding of civic polity and culture. 17th century Quaker theologian, Robert Barclay, used the language of 'customs' to connote social conventions that indicated worldly status. For example, he called bowing to superiors and salutations denoting social deference 'vain customs'. However, there is a difference between Woolman's use of the word 'customs' and Barclay's. Woolman did not apply the word 'customs' to social conventions because they were

discouraged the use of luxury items because they were 'Customs contrary to pure wisdom, which tend to change agreeable [sic] employ into a Toy [sic], and to involve people into many difficulties...'²¹⁶ Work, Woolman believed, was beneficial and divinely ordained, but, when work was undertaken outside of 'Pure Wisdom', it became a 'Custom' and 'Toy'.²¹⁷ For Woolman, anything done outside of divine revelation was a sinful custom, which tended 'to alienate the minds of people from their truest Interest'.²¹⁸

Woolman believed that some life-style choices and possessions were only possible because of the oppression of slaves on whose backs the luxury of others was supported. In other words, the slave economy was used to sustain particular 'customs distinguishable from pure wisdom [which have] entangled many, and the desire of gain to support these customs greatly opposed the work of Truth'.²¹⁹ In this case, Woolman did not say what those 'customs' were, but focused on the spiritual danger of 'customs' because they were anything but 'pure wisdom' and so 'opposed' God's purposes in the world.²²⁰ Thus, Woolman considered 'customs' to be a contemporary form of 'idolatry' because they indicated that a practice or luxury item had superseded absolute devotion to the dictates of God's will.²²¹

'worldly', but to commonly accepted behaviours which were oppressive. Thus Woolman's use of 'customs' takes on an ethical, outwardly focused dimension absent in Barclay's use of the word. Barclay applied the term to practices that would distinguish non-Quakers from Quakers, while Woolman applied the term to behaviours that infected Quaker and non-Quaker practice alike. He protested against the way 'customs' harmed humanity universally, not in defense of a sectarian peculiarity. Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism*, 287; Robert Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity*, ed. Licia Kuenning (Glenside, PA: Quaker Heritage Press, 2002), 429, 440, 443

²¹⁶ Woolman, 'Serious Considerations on Trade', 398.

²¹⁷ Woolman, 'Serious Considerations on Trade', 398.

²¹⁸ Woolman, 'Serious Considerations on Trade', 398.

²¹⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 119.

²²⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 119.

²²¹ Woolman, 'Statement on the Use of Silver Vessels.'

Those trapped in the entanglements of sin, 'customs', were alienated from God's direct governance and in a state 'amidst all this confusion, and these scenes of sorrow and distress' that prevented the individual from responding to the initiative and example of the 'Prince of Peace'.²²² This confusion obscured 'an earnest desire to be disentangled from everything connected with selfish customs'.²²³ Moreover, Woolman argued that the state of sin was a serious threat to the individual's eternal prospects. Alienated from God, the individual was unable to 'stand in that uprightness wherein man was first made'.²²⁴ The creation, Woolman implied, was good and established by God. While sin corrupted God's design, it was not corrupted irreparably because humanity could be restored to the state of 'uprightness' from before the Fall.²²⁵

Inherent in Woolman's apocalypticism was the belief that sin was no trivial thing to be wiped away supernaturally at some future time and of no concern in the present. Rather, sin corrupted the divine purpose, trapped people in a state separated from God and was animated through social structures. Woolman admitted that even good, religious people were made 'parties and fellow helpers' in the continuation of evil 'from one age to another'.²²⁶ As a result, sin, passed down from generation to generation, left 'less room for that which is good to work upon [one's progeny]', and children became more and more hardened and 'the entrance into their hearts becomes in a great measure shut up against the gentle movings of uncreated Purity'.²²⁷

In a partnership between God and the faithful, hearts and social structures were transformed in a battle that sought to eradicate sin. Those transformed to their true-self

²²² Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 253.

²²³ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 253.

²²⁴ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 253.

²²⁵ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 253.

²²⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on Keeping Negroes, Part Second', 231–232.

²²⁷ Woolman, 'Considerations on Keeping Negroes, Part Second', 237.

could no longer participate in sin²²⁸ because they had become different beings and that, naturally, led to a different outward comportment consistent with 'divine order'.²²⁹ Radical dependence on God's leadership undermined sin's social dimension because the faithful would find guidance in God alone through direct revelation and the example of Christ:

And I have felt, in that which doth not deceive, that if Friends who have known the Truth, keep in that Tenderness of Heart, where all Views of outward Gain are given up, and their Trust is only on the Lord, he will graciously lead some to be Patterns of deep Self-denial, in Things relating to Trade, and handicraft Labour: and that some who have Plenty of the Treasures of this World, will example in a plain frugal Life, and pay Wages to such whom they may hire, more liberally than is now customary in some Places.²³⁰

The social dimensions of sin would be reversed, Woolman believed, because God would lead some out of the 'customs' of degenerate society and into a life consistent with the theologicocial vision. He believed that early Quakers had embodied this and as a result 'the Divine Witness in many Hearts was reached'.²³¹

Woolman adopted a prophetic identity that gave form to his experience of God's revelation. He abstained from many of the luxury goods promoted by the transatlantic

²²⁸ Fox railed against the clergy of his day for emphasising the inevitability of sin, even among the regenerate. For Fox, this was tantamount to limiting the power and sovereignty of God's kingdom on earth. Here, we see a difference between Fox and Barclay. Barclay separated justification and sanctification into two different works. He related the ability to overcome sin to each person's own 'measure', and he believed people could still fall back into sin. Barclay could not 'deny' perfection, yet emphasised how tenuous any such state would be. Moreover, he did not claim such a state for himself. It was only a possibility for the human to achieve, not a fact bestowed on the regenerate by God.

George Fox, *The Works of George Fox*, vol. 4 (Philadelphia: Marcus T. C. Gould, 1831), 188-189; Barclay, *Apology*, 207; cf. Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word*, 191; Tousley, 'Experience of Regeneration', 37, 47; see also, 4.2.1, 5.1.

²²⁹ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 247.

²³⁰ John Woolman, 'On Trading in Superfluities', in *The Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, ed. Amelia M. Gummere (New York: Macmillan company, 1922), 504. This paragraph is also repeated verbatim in Woolman's *Journal*, 184.

²³¹ Woolman, 'On Trading in Superfluities', 504.

economy,²³² paid for lodging at the homes of slaveholders²³³ and wore undyed garments²³⁴ among his other ascetic practices,²³⁵ but, more fundamentally, repudiated the spiritual 'Dimness' at the core of human apostasy.²³⁶ On the other hand, human sinfulness rejected God's intentions for the world because it was fostered by a spirit that 'disordereth creation'.²³⁷ That chaotic, anti-creation spirit led to outward acts of oppression which opposed Christ's alternative and impending government: 'And how forcibly do these Things [a spirit opposed to God's revelation and for luxury, greed and slavery] work against the Increase of the Government of the Prince of Peace!'²³⁸ It was this state of apostasy that Woolman attacked with prophetic vigour because 'in the selfish spirit stands idolatry'.²³⁹ To 'depart from pure universal righteousness' enhanced the power of sin and that 'which in the nature of the thing is like offering incense to an idol'²⁴⁰ and rebelled against the spread of God's purposes.²⁴¹

In summary, sin obscured the divine revelation and was an act of rebellion against divine governance. When Woolman regarded the spirit that led people to support slavery, he wrote:

Many are the Vanities and Luxuries of the present Age, and in labouring to support a Way of living conformable to the present World, the Departure from that Wisdom that is pure and peaceable, hath been great. Under the Sense of a deep Revolt, and an overflowing Stream of Unrighteousness, my Life has often been a Life of Mourning, and tender Desires are raised in me, that the Nature of this Practice may be laid to

²³² Woolman, 'Journal', 53.

²³³ Woolman, 'Journal', 60-61.

²³⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 120-121.

²³⁵ For example, Woolman walked on some of his ministry journeys as a sign against 'pride and wantonness'. Woolman, 'Journal', 150.

²³⁶ Woolman, 'On Trading in Superfluities', 504.

²³⁷ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 492-493.

²³⁸ Woolman, 'On the Slave Trade', 497.

²³⁹ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 253.

²⁴⁰ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 253.

²⁴¹ Woolman, 'On the Slave Trade', 497.

Heart.²⁴²

Woolman's theology of sin was both prophetic and apocalyptic because he thought sin was a state diametrically opposed, a 'deep Revolt', to 'that Wisdom that is pure and peaceable'.²⁴³ Woolman desired to undermine this rebellion and expose the true 'Nature' of sin.²⁴⁴ He wanted to defeat all forces that opposed God's intentions for society and understood that battle was to be fought in the spiritual realm and in the everyday practices of the world in which he lived.²⁴⁵ As he viewed the contrast between his vision of God's will for society and the apostasy of the world around him, he was distraught. His, was 'a Life of Mourning'.²⁴⁶ However, he continued to call his fellow colonists out of a state of apostasy and into a state in God, which, Woolman felt, would, in the end, 'spread' across the world²⁴⁷ and win the day.²⁴⁸

3.3 Chapter Summary

I have argued, in this chapter, that Woolman's theology was prophetic because he publicly challenged what he thought was spiritual and social corruption with the content of divine revelation. He called colonists to submit themselves to God's purposes.²⁴⁹ Woolman felt God's will made claims on all aspects of human affairs and so the

²⁴² Woolman, 'On the Slave Trade', 497.

²⁴³ Woolman, 'On the Slave Trade', 497.

²⁴⁴ Woolman, 'On the Slave Trade', 497.

²⁴⁵ Woolman, 'On the Slave Trade', 497.

²⁴⁶ Woolman, 'On the Slave Trade', 497.

²⁴⁷ Woolman believed that the individual established in God's will would participate in the eventual victory of God's purposes:

...and as the man whose mind is conformed to universal love hath his trust settled in God and finds a firm foundation to stand on in any changes or revolutions that happen amongst men, so also the goodness of his conduct tends to spread a kind, benevolent disposition in the world.

Woolman, 'Plea', 241.

²⁴⁸ Woolman, 'On the Slave Trade', 497; see, 4.1.3 and 4.2.4.

²⁴⁹ See 3.2.1.

historical issues of the 18th century fell under the purview of God's governance.²⁵⁰

Woolman rejected any attempt to disassociate world affairs from religious affairs because God's will encompassed all.²⁵¹

Woolman believed that he, in particular, was commissioned by God to announce the revelation he had received and so give it outward expression, in order to make known God's intentions for the transformation of the world.²⁵² As he challenged colonists with an alternative vision for world affairs, the model of the Hebrew prophets presented him with a template for being a representative of the community, committed to the community, but also a harbinger of the impending victory of God's reign over apostasy.²⁵³

Woolman's propheticism is a key feature of his apocalyptic theology because it represented the outward manifestation of divine revelation consistent with the alternative order God had established in the heart and was establishing in society as a whole, and so sets the stage for an exploration of his eschatology. In chapter two, I argued that Woolman's apocalyptic theology originated out of a direct experience of divine revelation and a transformation of states within that revelation. In this chapter, I argued that Woolman challenged contemporary society with the claims of that revelation, which also sought to transform society itself. In chapter four, I argue that Woolman believed God's kingdom was already intervening in world events to fulfill God's eternal purposes.

²⁵⁰ See 3.2.

²⁵¹ See 3.2.2.

²⁵² See 3.1.

²⁵³ See 3.1.2 and 1.4.

CHAPTER FOUR

JOHN WOOLMAN'S REALISING ESCHATOLOGY

In chapter three, I demonstrated that Woolman believed God intervened in human affairs through human agents who witnessed outwardly to the direct revelation they experienced inwardly. God, Woolman thought, called humanity to live in a state under God's direct leadership, called 'the Government of Christ', and Woolman used the phrase interchangeably with language from Isaiah's peaceable kingdom.¹ The message of the divine revelation addressed historical time and social structures and commissioned him to act on God's behalf as a prophet.² These two key pieces of Woolman's theology, 1) his understanding of revelation and 2) embodiment of that revelation in prophetic confrontation, lead now to those aspects of Woolman's theology that relate directly to his eschatology. In this chapter, I argue that Woolman's eschatology can be understood as a realising eschatology of God's governance dawning on earth and that this eschatology can best be characterised through the themes of amillennialism, perfectionism and impending judgment. These themes are explored in turn.

4.1 Amillennialism: 'On Earth as it is in Heaven'

In order to understand the contours of Woolman's eschatology, it is important to discuss the diversity of scholarly opinions on what constitutes eschatology because Woolman's eschatology does not fit neatly into the classic and systematic

¹ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 394–395.

² See chapter 3.

categorisations.³ In fact, his eschatology was even out of step with some of the major eschatological sentiments of his day.⁴ Thus, the following discussion of scholarship on the subject of eschatology is here used to establish traditional definitions within the field in order to help discern Woolman's eschatology. While his theogico-social vision was not intended to be a well-categorised and clearly defined theological system, this thesis demonstrates that his eschatology was a central component of his apocalyptic theology expressed through the motif of the government of Christ.

Broadly speaking, eschatology is the theology of last things, the ultimate fulfillment and resolution of the whole of the creation and concerns the final state of individuals at the end of time.⁵ Eschatology, Jerry Walls contends, is both a temporal concept and a *teleological* one.⁶ That is, eschatology concerns not only the end of time, but the fulfillment of God's purposes⁷ and the ultimate victory of God's revealed will over evil.⁸ In the *teleological* sense, it is possible to consider, for example, Jesus' whole life as eschatological because he obeyed the will of God the Father perfectly and enacted his purposes on earth.⁹ Christine Downing asserts that the concept of 'fulfillment' is different from both the end of time and time's endless repetition.¹⁰ Rather, 'fulfillment' connotes the changing of one epoch of time to the next, a new time.¹¹

I demonstrated, in chapter two, that Woolman's theology of revelation entailed a

³ In 5.3 I argue that Woolman was a constructive theologian who neglected many doctrines associated with systematic theology. The absence of certain doctrines enhances the prominence of those that feature in his theology.

⁴ See, for example, the discussion of Jonathan Edwards' eschatology in 6.3.2.

⁵ Walls, *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, 4.

⁶ Walls, *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, 4.

⁷ Walls, *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, 4.

⁸ Hill, *In God's Time*, 4.

⁹ Walls, *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, 4-5.

¹⁰ Christine Downing, 'An Eschatological Theology', *Quaker Religious Thought* 11, no. 1 (1969): 20.

¹¹ Downing, 'An Eschatological Theology', 20.

direct and perfect knowledge of God's will on earth and a perfect obedience to act according to the *telos* of God's purposes. In this chapter, I identify how Woolman felt individuals could act eschatologically.¹² Thus, eschatology and history interact. Humanity, Woolman believed, could reject God's will or it could join with it. In either scenario, as Hill argues, 'eschatology is about God acting in and through history'.¹³ A theology of 'first things' worked together with a theology of 'last things'.¹⁴ Woolman's understanding of eschatology, then, corresponds with Hill's articulation: 'The end will be as the beginning; the creation will return to its pre-fallen state when evil, sickness, and death did not exist'.¹⁵ However, for Woolman, death would still exist in the eschaton – the eon in which God's revealed purposes would be fulfilled – but, it would exist not as something to be feared or avoided, but as a transition to a non-material state, which would, in all other ways, maintain the direct relationship with God that had been enjoyed in its fullness while alive in the physical sense.¹⁶

Since Woolman's eschatological language was informed by the eschatology of the Hebrew prophets, it is helpful to describe some of the characteristics of prophetic eschatology: 1) it was often national or universal, as opposed to individual, in scope; 2)

¹² See 4.1.

¹³ Hill, *In God's Time*, 8.

¹⁴ For Woolman, the divine-human relationship present at creation would be restored within time. The protological restoration was to be the broad restoration of God's societal organisation and the re-establishment of proper relationships: 'How few have faithfully followed that Holy Leader, who prepares his People to labour for the Restoration of true Harmony amongst our Fellow-creatures! True happiness on earth resulted from this state of social 'harmony', Woolman maintained, known in 'that real intellectual happiness suited to man in his primitive innocence and now to be found in true renovation of mind.' Through this 'renovation of mind', or this-worldly transformation into a state united with God's will, the direct leadership of Christ would bring about the 'Restoration' of God's intended purposes. The world as it was had not yet fully realised that restoration, but, in Christ, 'healing' would occur, justice be established on earth and 'true harmony restored'. Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 495; Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 205; Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 443. See also Appendix B.

¹⁵ Hill, *In God's Time*, 9.

¹⁶ See 4.1.1.

because the prophets did not have a fully developed understanding of heaven and hell, it did not feature a strict 'cleaving' between 'these otherworldly realities and present history';¹⁷ 3) a 'future eon radically discontinuous with the present [is expected]. In it, the circumstances of history will be transformed but not transcended.'¹⁸ The originally 'good' creation, 'but temporarily marred by injustice, infirmity, war, and sin – and in general by evil – will be reclaimed and redeemed by God';¹⁹ 4) it contends that the present situation is drastically opposed to God's purposes, but will be set right in a way known only to God.²⁰ 'This is no escapist eschatology,' Bill Arnold explains, 'since it never completely forsakes the world we now inhabit. Rather it longs for, indeed, expects, a period in which Yhwh triumphs over evil, redeems his people Israel and, finally rules the world in peace and salvation.'²¹ Thus, the Hebrew prophets believed God called the faithful to live and act eschatologically with a reverse ethic to the dominant, apostate value-system.²² For the prophets, obedience to God's ultimate purposes within a fallen world was not an afterthought, but a natural consequence of an eschatology that emphasised God's activity in and through history.²³

Woolman's eschatology was similar to the prophetic view in that he emphasised this-world as the locus of God's transformation.²⁴ Moreover, in his theology of the government of Christ, Woolman claimed that God could and would triumph over sin

¹⁷ Bill Arnold, 'Old Testament Eschatology and the Rise of Apocalypticism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry Walls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 24.

¹⁸ Arnold, 'Old Testament Eschatology and the Rise of Apocalypticism', 24.

¹⁹ Arnold argues that, if eschatology is restricted to a 'clearly formulated conception of the end of the world or of time, with a pronounced doctrine of resurrection and individual judgment, initiating a radically new era of salvation distinct and discontinuous with current reality', then ancient Israel would have little to offer. However, he says that such a definition is too narrow an understanding of eschatology. Arnold, 'Old Testament Eschatology and the Rise of Apocalypticism', 24.

²⁰ Arnold, 'Old Testament Eschatology and the Rise of Apocalypticism', 25.

²¹ Arnold, 'Old Testament Eschatology and the Rise of Apocalypticism', 25.

²² Arnold, 'Old Testament Eschatology and the Rise of Apocalypticism', 25.

²³ Arnold, 'Old Testament Eschatology and the Rise of Apocalypticism', 25.

²⁴ See 4.1.1.

and oppression and rule over the world with justice.²⁵ Walls notes that, in the spectrum of eschatological theology, there are those who lean towards a futurist eschatology, which emphasises the cross and is pessimistic about this-worldly transformation, at one end, and those who emphasise a 'realized' eschatology focusing on Christ's resurrection and the availability of the Holy Spirit for earthly living, at the other end.²⁶ Walls clarifies that the tension between those who emphasise the future end of the eschatological spectrum and those who emphasise the realised end, is practical and political in its implications.²⁷ ²⁸ Within this spectrum, Woolman's eschatology leaned towards what Walls calls a 'realized' eschatology,²⁹ with the notable difference that the

²⁵ See 4.1.3.

²⁶ Arnold, 'Old Testament Eschatology and the Rise of Apocalypticism', 13.

²⁷ Walls writes:

Whereas a strongly realized eschatology gives one reason and motivation to work for social change, confident that God wills and empowers such work, an eschatology that is predominantly futurist may be less motivated to work for social change and improvement.

Walls, *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, 14.

²⁸ Walls, *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, 14.

²⁹ The term 'realized eschatology' derives from C.H. Dodd's research into Jesus' eschatology. Dodd argues that Jesus claimed his ministry had effected the kingdom of God in ways not previously felt.

It is not a matter of having God for your King in the sense that you obey His commandments: it is a matter of being confronted with the power of God at work in the world. In other words, the "eschatological" Kingdom of God is proclaimed as a present fact, which men must recognize, whether by their actions they accept or reject it.'

However, Dale Allison, Jr. contends that Dodd's 'realized eschatology' is really a 'noneschatology':

One can take Jesus' statements about the presence of the kingdom to imply that he thought himself to be in the middle of the unfolding of the eschatological scenario. The term "inaugurated eschatology" has often been used to refer to this sort of idea. A point regularly missed by those who give us a noneschatological Jesus is that, among sayings thought to declare the kingdom present, we find the language of advent, not reference to a changeless reality. Luke 10:9 says that the kingdom has come or has come near.

Similar, is Luke 11:20: "upon you has come the kingdom of God." Whatever else these statements may mean, they give a temporal character to the kingdom. Presumably, there was a time when the kingdom of God had not come upon people. Does this make sense if Jesus had in view an "always available divine dominion?"...Does not the use of temporal verbs with the kingdom reflect Jesus' belief that something new and unprecedented had happened? Are we not impelled to think in terms of an eschatological scenario?

Since the term 'inaugurated eschatology' refers to a particular eschatology explicitly 'inaugurated' by the incarnation of Christ, a concept Woolman touched on only briefly (See 4.1.1), I will use the term 'realising eschatology' to distinguish Woolman's eschatology from the existing definition of 'inaugurated eschatology.' C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Scribner, 1961), 28–29; Dale Allison, Jr. 'The Eschatology of Jesus', in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism*, ed. Bernard McGinn, John J. Collins, and Stephen Stein (New York: Continuum, 2003), 144–145.

past tense, 'realized', is better understood, in Woolman's case, to be the present continuous tense, an active 'realising' eschatology,³⁰ because he understood himself to be in the middle of an eschatological scenario, which was progressing towards a particular end. Rather than a nontemporal, 'noneschatological'³¹ eschatology that did not conceive of the eschaton as impending or unfolding in special ways in particular historical events, Woolman believed that the events of his day made the eschaton a particularly consequential reality compared to previous ages.³²

a) The Kingdom of God

Similar to analyses of the eschatological thought of the New Testament Church, Woolman's theology of the kingdom of God³³ maintained an emphasis on this age, not

³⁰ The term 'realising eschatology' is not new to discussions of Quaker theology. Spencer classifies 17th and 18th century eschatology as such. Spencer, 'Holiness: the Quaker Way of Perfection', 154–155; see also, review of Damiano in 1.7; Damiano, 'On Earth as it is in Heaven', and Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word*, 30–31.

³¹ Allison, 'The Eschatology of Jesus', 144–145.

³² See 4.1.2 and 4.1.3.

³³ The 'kingdom of God' is a dominant concept in eschatology in general and in Woolman's eschatology in particular. E. P. Sanders considers the concept of the 'kingdom of God' to be central to Jesus' goal of proclaiming God's power. He asserts that, while Jesus' view of the proximity of the kingdom of God was ambiguous – whether it was present or future or presently unfolding to be fully consummated in the future – Jesus understood God's reign to be totally distinct from that of human kingdoms and, thus, the kingdom of God pointed to a 'radical reorientation of values and power.' This is a view of Jesus as an 'apocalyptic prophet' which contrasts with Dodd's 'realized eschatology'. Sanders insists that two implications can be drawn with respect to the temporal reality of God's kingdom: Firstly, that God rules in heaven; the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven exists eternally there. While God acts in history occasionally, he completely and consistently governs only heaven. Secondly, in the future, God will rule the earth, just as God already rules in heaven.' He has chosen to allow human history to run on with relatively little interference, but someday he will bring normal history to an end and govern the world perfectly. Briefly put: the kingdom of God always exists *there*; in the *future* it will exist *here*.' Sanders also notes that Paul believed that 'the full revelation of the kingdom of God may lie in the future, but in the present people can experience some of its benefits.' The main difference, therefore, between Woolman's understanding of the kingdom of God and Sanders' research on Jesus' view is that Woolman did not believe the kingdom could be rightly separated from the present order – even for a time – because any separation was always the result of apostasy and not just the result of God biding God's time for a future moment to bring the kingdom to fullness. However, Sanders' emphasis on the direct governance of God's kingdom, which manifested a contrary ethic to the dominant ethic of sinful powers within world history, coincides with Woolman's view, even though Sander's reserved the kingdom for a completely future time. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 22–23; Allison Jr., 'The Eschatology of Jesus', 144–145. E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Press, 1993), 169, 178; cf. 1Cor. 6:9ff, Rom. 14:17.

the next.³⁴ Ladd's study of the Hebrew prophets has, likewise, identified that the eschatological nature of the kingdom of God relates directly to an 'underlying theology of apocalyptic eschatology' in which 'the kingdom of God can be realised only by an inbreaking of the divine world into human history. The necessity for such an apocalyptic consummation is found in the effect of man's sin upon the physical world.'³⁵ According to Ladd, the prophets viewed the 'redemptive history' of the earth 'as the divinely ordained scene of human history and as participating to a real degree in the fate of mankind. The physical world, with man, has fallen under the doom and decay of sin, and therefore in its present condition cannot be the scene of the perfected kingdom of God.'³⁶ Thus, Ladd argues, this prophetic-apocalyptic view of God's kingdom supported the supposition that a radical, this-worldly transformation would occur through God's intervention which would establish 'a new order of things' on earth.³⁷ This scholarship emphasises this world as the eschatological theatre where God's intervention and human faithfulness would establish God's ultimate purposes within this world,³⁸ as sinful 'worldliness' is destroyed.³⁹

b) Millennialism

In much of the theological scholarship, eschatologies are identified by their understanding of the millennium – as in premillennialism and postmillennialism⁴⁰ –

³⁴ For more on the eschatology of the earliest Christians, see, Christopher Rowland, 'The Eschatology of the New Testament Church', in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry Walls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 69; see 4.1.1 and 4.1.3.

³⁵ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 197.

³⁶ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 197.

³⁷ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 197.

³⁸ See 4.1.3 and 4.2.

³⁹ See 3.2.4 and 4.3.

⁴⁰ Robbins and Palmer note that, in the last two centuries, the dominant eschatological frameworks have been *postmillennialism*

which envisions the return of Christ transpiring after the millennial kingdom has been

identified in Revelation 20.⁴¹ In Christian theology, the millennium is generally understood to be a 1,000 year period, which would be significantly better than the present state of affairs, and is 'associated with a longing for divine, healing powers in order to overcome war, hunger, [and] injustice',⁴² and of Christ's direct reign on earth.⁴³ However, in contemporary, general usage millennialism, Catherine Wessinger asserts, refers to a 'belief in an earthly salvation, and no longer implies belief that the kingdom of God will last one thousand years... Millennialism in its most general definition refers to the expectation of an imminent and collective earthly salvation accomplished according to a divine or superhuman plan.'⁴⁴

ushered in largely by human agency in terms of the gradual Christianization of culture; and catastrophic *premillennialism*, which sees humanity as incapable of creating the kingdom or even of blocking the coming reign of Antichrist (or Great Tribulation), such that Christ must arrive with a heavenly host and vanquish Antichrist at Armageddon before the millennium can unfold.

Robbins and Palmer, 'Introduction', 9; see also, Partridge, 'The End is Nigh', 193.

⁴¹ In Revelation 20, an angel bound Satan for a thousand years: the millennium. The millennium, then, is a period of time under God's rule in which the antagonistic forces of Satan are restrained. However, the temporal location of the millennium in regards to the 'rapture' of the faithful up to Heaven is unclear. 'Premillennialism' contends that the rapture occurs before the millennium, while 'postmillennialists' believe it happens afterwards. Wessinger argues that the terms 'premillennialism' and 'postmillennialism' have become obscure and should be abandoned. She proposes, instead, that eschatologies be classified as 'catastrophic millennialism' or 'progressive millennialism'. Modern scholarship has tended to focus on 'catastrophic millennialism', she contends, and so purports inaccurate characterisations of the range of eschatological and millennial theologies. Wessinger makes an important point in her catastrophic/progressive classification, however, it seems possible to achieve precision in terms of both the catastrophic/progressive nature of the millennial vision and the temporal relationship of the millennium to the return of Christ. Moreover, Stein argues that among America's 'alternative' religious groups like the Shakers, Mormons and Seventh-day Adventists the common distinction between postmillennialism and premillennialism has limited usefulness when discussing the apocalypticism of outsider religious groups. In many of these communities apocalyptic optimism and pessimism exist side by side; the forces of construction and destruction operate in tandem; and the fulfillment of prophecy involves both human actions and divine activity. As an added complication, alternative religious communities often modify their outlook on apocalyptic matters. As a result, it is more instructive to identify the principal apocalyptic themes employed by these groups than to force the data into pre- or postmillennial constructs.

Stein's analysis of the fluidity of eschatological and apocalyptic theologies could also apply to Quaker theologies and provides an avenue for future research on dissenting American religious groups.

Wessinger, 'Millennialism With and Without Mayhem', 48; Stein, 'Apocalypticism Outside the Mainstream', 494.

⁴² Friedrich, 'Protestant Theology', 251–252.

⁴³ Barnes, 'Images of Hope and Despair', 149.

⁴⁴ Partridge notes the specific reference of 'millennialism' to the 1,000 year reign of Christ spoken of in

Woolman's vision of the government of Christ certainly fits the broadest definition of 'millennial'⁴⁵ because it envisages a hope for a future new order of peace and harmony.⁴⁶ However, Woolman was not 'millenarian' in the traditional sense of the word and, furthermore, greater theological precision than broad 'millennial' terminology is possible.⁴⁷ In fact, Woolman is best understood as amillennial,⁴⁸ and the absence of a 1,000 year millennial reign of Christ in Woolman's theology is an essential feature of his eschatology and illuminates his aspirations for colonial society.⁴⁹

Amillennialism is the idea that there will be no millennium, no earthly reign of Christ before the *parousia*.⁵⁰ Amillennialists believe that the final judgment will immediately follow Christ's return and issue directly into the final states reserved for the righteous and wicked.⁵¹ Amillennialism is sometimes confused with postmillennialism

Revelation, but contends, with Wessinger, that the term 'is now applied more broadly to any eschatological, utopian period, regardless of length, established by a greater-than-human agent or force for the benefit of the faithful.' Partridge then differentiates 'millennialism' from the term 'millenarian', which, 'although substantially overlapping millennial and even used synonymously by some scholars, can be usefully distinguished by more explicitly incorporating the belief in cataclysmic initiation.' Wessinger, 'Millennialism With and Without Mayhem', 48; Partridge, 'The End is Nigh', 192; see also, Robert Lerner, 'Millennialism', in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: Continuum, 1998), 365.

⁴⁵ Slaughter's recent biography of Woolman suggests that, in light of Woolman's view of a literal kingdom of God on earth he can be considered 'millenarian'. Plank concurs with this designation and entitles a discussion of Woolman's vision of Isaiah 11:6-9, 'Pastures and the Millennium'. Elsewhere, Plank identifies Woolman's idealisation of rural life and skepticism of transatlantic trade as the result of his 'millenarianism'. More recently, Plank claims that Woolman and the Quaker reformers 'retained a millenarian sense of optimism despite the setbacks' to their hope for the Quaker community in the 1760s. Moreover, Plank contends that while Woolman walked through England, in 1772, he was led to question abusive animal treatment and condemned 'acquisitive commerce' and, instead, was led 'to embrace a millenarian alternative.'

In these examples, Slaughter and Plank seem to use 'millenarian' as a synonym for 'millennial', despite the fact that Woolman never referred to a literal 1,000 year reign, nor did he emphasise an abrupt, cataclysmic end to the world. Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 211–212; Plank, 'The Flame of Life Was Kindled in All Animal and Sensitive Creatures', 585; Plank, 'Sailing with John Woolman', 80; Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 169, 213.

⁴⁶ See 2.2 and 4.1.1.

⁴⁷ Therefore, this thesis uses the traditional definitions of 'millennial', 'millennium' and 'millenarian'.

⁴⁸ John Punshon claims that early Quaker eschatologies most closely align with amillennialism. Woolman's eschatology, as shown here, gives additional merit to Punshon's analysis. John Punshon, *The Faith and Future of the Friends Church* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 2001), 308, 314.

⁴⁹ See 4.1.1–4.1.4.

⁵⁰ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987), 1212.

⁵¹ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1212.

because they both tend to take the 1,000 years mentioned in Revelation 20 as symbolic, but, unlike the amillennialist, the postmillennialist maintains that the millennium involves an earthly reign of Christ prior to a heavenly fulfillment.⁵² Woolman was not attempting to be an 'amillennialist', neither was he concerned with a rigid ordering of a detailed sequence of eschatological events.⁵³ Yet, amillennialism is a helpful term for understanding Woolman's eschatology because it eliminates the 1,000 year millennium as a precondition to the *parousia* and, so, without this precondition, the stage is set for Christ's imminent return at any moment.⁵⁴

However, Woolman's eschatology was different from modern forms of amillennialism in that his was spiritualised, but in a way that included believing that his actions were the work of the kingdom of God. Not only did Woolman not talk about a set-apart millennium before or after Christ's return, but he held that the presence of God's kingdom was linked to Christ's inward revelation.⁵⁵ Woolman believed that Christ was directly available to all and felt that the 'mind of Christ' dwelled in him.⁵⁶ This indwelling presence of Christ constituted a direct, but spiritual *parousia* in which the individual was ushered into Christ's government,⁵⁷ sin was judged and destroyed⁵⁸ and the faithful experienced resurrection into a new, redeemed state on earth.⁵⁹ The

⁵² Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1212.

⁵³ Proponents of amillennialism claim Augustine as their forefather, whether or not Augustine would be considered an actual amillennialist. As Millard Erickson contends, it is likely that postmillennialism and amillennialism 'simply were not differentiated for most of the first nineteen centuries of the church.' Amillennialism grew in popularity in the 20th century as postmillennialism lost ground to premillennialism. While modern theologians argue that amillennialism contains exegetical errors, such as the legitimacy of a symbolic interpretation of the 1,000 year reign and whether the resurrections mentioned in Revelation 20 are physical or spiritual, Woolman was not concerned with these speculative details and, indeed, he predates these debates. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1213-1214.

⁵⁴ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1215.

⁵⁵ See 4.1.1.

⁵⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 448-449.

⁵⁷ See 4.1.3.

⁵⁸ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 385.

⁵⁹ See 4.1.3.

components of this eschatology are consistent with the main elements of amillennialism, but Woolman spiritualised this theology and believed it would occur in this world in the hearts and lives of the faithful. Thus, while the divine revelation was inwardly known in a spiritual way, it made claims on the outward aspects of economy, politics and human behaviour and, through the actions of the faithful, took on concrete form.

In most amillennial formulations, the return of Christ and transformation into final states was believed to occur all at once, in one moment across the globe.⁶⁰ However, in Woolman's spiritualised amillennialism the eschaton unfolded in the conversion of the faithful, of whatever religious persuasion they might be,⁶¹ and so did not happen all at once, but gradually and gained universal momentum.⁶²

4.1.1 Woolman and the Kingdom of God

This sub-section describes Woolman's amillennialism, which was a this-worldly eschatology that understood the eschaton to be a present, realising influence which transformed the creation and established God's ultimate ordering for society on earth. The direct rule of Christ is explored under the headings of the kingdom of God, Reformation and New Nature. These aspects of Woolman's eschatology are described in turn below.

In a 1755 Epistle authored by Woolman⁶³ and signed by thirteen others,⁶⁴ Woolman warned Quakers to focus on God's kingdom rather than participate in the conflict between England and France, which he thought was opposed to God's

⁶⁰ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1212.

⁶¹ See 2.2.1.

⁶² See 4.1.2.

⁶³ Woolman, 'Journal, Manuscript B.'

⁶⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 50.

'peaceable kingdom'.⁶⁵ He cited as his motivation for ceasing 'from national contests' a perfectionist statement⁶⁶ of this-worldly redemption based on the incarnation of Christ: 'being convinced that the gracious design of the Almighty in sending his son into the world was to repair the breach made by disobedience, to finish sin and transgression that his kingdom might come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'⁶⁷ The historical events of the incarnation and Jesus' act of redemption for humanity created, in Woolman's view, a new reality of perfect faithfulness which repaired 'the breach' and restored the earthly realm to consistency with God's heavenly kingdom and will.⁶⁸

This passage is problematic because Woolman was unclear as to how the incarnation related to the present moment. The purpose of Christ's 'sending' was to restore the kingdom on earth, but this epistle portrays the fulfillment of that 'design' as still contingent and so Quakers needed to be reminded of it.⁶⁹ Had Woolman consistently argued that the incarnation and crucifixion established the kingdom in its fullness, he could be considered as having a 'realised' eschatology, but in light of the role of humanity and world events in the unfolding of God's kingdom, it must be considered a 'realising' eschatology.

Woolman was not concerned with eschatological timelines. He believed that God's purpose was to establish the kingdom on earth and this would be accomplished as people were united with the divine will.⁷⁰ Christ's redemptive work destroyed the power

⁶⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 47, 48-49.

⁶⁶ I explore Woolman's perfectionism in 4.2, but his concept of the kingdom of God and perfectionism were so inter-related that in places they must be addressed together.

⁶⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 48.

⁶⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 48.

⁶⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 48.

⁷⁰ See 2.2 and 4.2.

of sin so that humanity could be established in God's kingdom.⁷¹ Woolman was ambiguous about what aspect of Christ's incarnation 'repaired the breach'⁷²— was it Christ's moral example, the crucifixion or the resurrection? – but, emphasised that, in Christ, the real state of things was different and the fulfillment of God's purposes was immediately possible, even if this fact was unrecognised by many and so only present in them in seed form.⁷³

For Woolman, the incarnation of Christ restored a direct relationship between God and humanity which established a new state based on God's purposes for the world.⁷⁴ Implied here was that, while the incarnation was a once-and-for-all event, the purpose of the incarnation was ongoing, as Christ continually comes to humanity so that God's 'will be done on earth as it *is* in heaven'.⁷⁵ Thus, for Woolman, those who were in Christ, in this new state, could not participate in the 'contests' of worldly kingdoms, since such contests corresponded with the fallen state Christ had already finished.⁷⁶

Since Woolman believed the incarnation of Christ and Christ's inward revelation made it possible for humans to enter the kingdom of God during their earthly lives, the eschaton must be present to some degree and, therefore, pressing on the machinations of

⁷¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 48.

⁷² Woolman's ambiguity, in this passage from the 1755 Epistle, is similar to George Fox's vague claim of the basis of human perfection through the incarnation:

[Christ] who was perfect comes to make man and woman perfect again and bring them again to the state God made them in; so he is the maker up of the breach and the peace betwixt God and man...But I told them Christ was come freely, who hath perfected for ever by one offering all them that are sanctified...

Fox, like Woolman, understood the incarnation to reconcile God and humanity and restore right relationship, but how that was actually accomplished he did not say. Both Woolman and Fox focus on the inward revelation of Christ as the determining factor, rather than a mechanistic or transactional theory of atonement. Fox, *Journal*, 367–368.

⁷³ Woolman, 'Journal', 48.

⁷⁴ For more on Woolman's new state, see 4.1.3.

⁷⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 48. Emphasis is mine.

⁷⁶ Fox expressed a similar notion, in 1651, when he refused to join the army on the grounds that 'I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars.' In the new state in Christ, Fox claimed he could not fight in carnal wars. Fox, *Journal*, 65; Woolman, 'Journal', 48.

human affairs.⁷⁷ Three years after the 1755 Epistle, Woolman stood before the gathered PYM, as they considered how to address slave owners in their ranks, and made reference to the claim divine revelation made on human behaviour: 'In infinite love and goodness [God] hath opened our understandings from one time to another concerning our duty toward this people [African-Americans], and it is not a time for delay.'⁷⁸ Divine revelation, Woolman believed, put pressure on Quakers to respond in obedience with urgency. He continued:

Should we now be sensible of what he requires of us, and through a respect to the private interest of some persons or through a regard to some friendships which do not stand on an immutable foundation, neglect to do our duty in firmness and constancy, still waiting for some extraordinary means to bring about their deliverance, it may be that by terrible things in righteousness God may answer us in this matter.⁷⁹

Woolman acknowledged that some, even Quakers, were not established in the new state of Christ's 'coming',⁸⁰ and thus rejected God's revelation.⁸¹ As colonists ignored the divine revelation, they failed to actualise the immediacy of eschatological transformation God had destined for them in this life,⁸² and, as a result, placed themselves in a precarious position in regard to the justice of God's 'righteousness'.⁸³ For Woolman, God's justice and God's determination to reveal God's will to humanity⁸⁴ meant that absolute obedience to God's ultimate purposes was a matter of grave urgency.⁸⁵

However, Woolman's 1755 statement concerning the new state in God's kingdom

⁷⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 93.

⁷⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 93.

⁷⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 93.

⁸⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 48.

⁸¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 93.

⁸² Woolman, 'Journal', 48.

⁸³ Woolman, 'Journal', 93; see also, 4.3.

⁸⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 93; see, 2.1.

⁸⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 93; see also, 4.3.

available through Christ, and his 1758 declaration that Quakers must act with expediency to implement God's purposes or else face God's justice, did not lead him to an other-worldly view of the eschaton. Like the eschatology of the Hebrew prophets, his spiritualised amillennialism did not advocate a strict cleavage between the supernatural world and history, but held that the eschaton had everything to do with God's present involvement in the world.⁸⁶ His eschatology was not a catastrophic premillennialism which only believed the eschaton to be available after history itself had been destroyed, but one that believed God's kingdom reigned in this-world as Christ's influence spread from heart to heart. For example, in an Epistle he authored in 1759,⁸⁷ he implied that the eschaton was possibly far off in the future and many generations would come and go, so Quakers should lay a solid spiritual foundation for them: 'Our own real good and the good of our posterity in some measure depends on the part we act, and it nearly concerns us to try our foundations impartially.'⁸⁸ On the surface, Woolman's emphasis on ethical purity for the benefit of successive generations would seem to validate Dandelion's contention that, after the first generation, Quakers developed a 'meantime theology' for living in the world, while the immediacy of the eschaton faded into the background of Quaker theology.⁸⁹ In fact, not only does Woolman state that there will be future generations after his, and, thus, the argument goes, the eschaton would be somewhere far in the future, but he continues, in the 1759 Epistle, to state that the present physical world was the proving ground for rewards or punishment after death: 'Such are the rewards of the just and unjust in a future state that to attend diligently to

⁸⁶ Arnold, 'Old Testament Eschatology', 24.

⁸⁷ For evidence of Woolman's authorship, see, Moulton, ed., *Journal and Major Essays of John Woolman*, 295–296.

⁸⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 99.

⁸⁹ Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity', 41.

the dictates of the spirit of Christ...during our short stay in this world, is a choice well becoming a free intelligent creature.⁹⁰ Obedience to the 'dictates of the spirit of Christ' would accumulate rewards in the afterlife, a theme rarely picked up by Woolman, while disobedience led to punishment.⁹¹ Since human life in the physical world, Woolman argued, was only a passing phenomenon in the span of eternity, it was prudent to follow Christ's ethical teaching.⁹²

Woolman's statements of 1755 and 1758 would seem to contradict his assertions of 1759, which can be read as downplaying the eschatological urgency present in the historical events of the mid-18th century. However, his 1759 Epistle fits easily with earlier and later statements and highlights important pieces of his eschatology: firstly, Woolman believed that the eschaton would come to fulfillment on earth. He did not locate the eschaton in a completely supernatural other-world and so human transformation and the fullness of the eschaton would take place on earth. Humanity, he believed, would continue to live on earth and successive generations would be born, but all this would happen in a perfected society under Christ's direct governance. In that perfected state, humanity would experience the divine presence, or 'habitation', as was depicted in the gathering of the saints before the throne of God in Revelation 7-8.⁹³ Hence, he emphasised a this-worldly eschaton which did not require a passive waiting on the emergence of another world. This coincides with Ladd's analysis of prophetic-apocalyptic eschatologies in which the earth was believed to be the divinely ordained theatre for the fulfillment of God's purposes.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 99.

⁹¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 99.

⁹² Woolman, 'Journal', 99.

⁹³ See 4.1.1 b) 'Habitation' with God.

⁹⁴ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 197.

Secondly, since the fullness of eschatological transformation would occur in this world, human, physical bodies would continue to age and die. However, one's true, spiritual self would be so transformed from one's previous self as to be in a new state.⁹⁵ In that state, the faithful were literally *in* the kingdom of God on earth, under divine government⁹⁶ and perfected,⁹⁷ so that all things were new and they received a new identity consistent with this new eschatological state.⁹⁸ In this case, Woolman's eschatology is not an example of a 'meantime eschatology',⁹⁹ but an active, this-worldly amillennial eschatology, which held Christ's inward 'habitation' to have initiated the divine 'reformation' which established God's kingdom on earth.¹⁰⁰

From that perspective, Woolman's writings of the mid- to late-1750s are not in conflict with each other, they just emphasise different aspects of his eschatology.¹⁰¹ Woolman did not set out to teach theology or develop a particular doctrine and so he was not careful to advocate for ideological positions. Instead, his theology can be seen through his ministry, through his reflections on the events of his day and through the contrast historical circumstances posed to his vision of what he thought the world should be. Thus, Woolman's theology is hard to characterise because it was not

⁹⁵ See 4.1.3.

⁹⁶ See 4.1.2.

⁹⁷ See 4.2.

⁹⁸ See 4.1.3.

⁹⁹ Dandelion argues that, after the first generation of Quakers, eschatology receded in importance and second generation leaders, like Robert Barclay, shifted their attention to a theology for living in the 'meantime', since the eschaton was not near. Dandelion, *Liturgies of Quakerism*, 41, 48.

¹⁰⁰ See 4.1.2.

¹⁰¹ However, this is not to imply that his eschatology did not change and develop over the course of his life, because it did. An increased apocalyptic focus can be seen in his writings of the late-1760s and early-1770s. It is not that Woolman's eschatology changed dramatically in content, but, in tone, it became more strident and overtly eschatological. While the roots of his apocalypticism can be seen throughout his writings from the moment of conversion as a young man, beginning in the 1760s his apocalypticism became more direct, as he adopted the language of the 'government of Christ'. When his writings are taken together, there is a consistent, unified theological vision in which the religious conviction of the young Woolman can be seen to contain the foundational elements of that of the mature Woolman.

systematic, but constructed according to his personal affinities and the spiritualist tradition that resonated with his understanding of divine presence.¹⁰² Neither did he abstract his theology in a way separated from the circumstances of his day. Perhaps this is why Woolman's apocalypticism – and the nuances of his eschatology – has not been adequately explored, or else has been left overly vague.¹⁰³

a) 'To the Completion of those Prophecies Already Begun': A Foot in the Eschaton, A Foot in the Present

This sub-section argues that Woolman believed God's government was presently available and that he was already under its rule. In that sense, he was both a citizen of God's kingdom while simultaneously a sojourner on earth. He had the tenuous position of maintaining one foot in the eschaton, and one foot in the world of 18th century society and felt commissioned to challenge the social practices of his fellow colonists with his theogeo-social vision of the kingdom. Hence, this sub-section explores the extent to which Woolman thought the eschaton was imminently present.

In the following sub-section, this thesis focuses on the other side of this equation and addresses how Christ's governance was still emerging and how Woolman believed God had initiated a 'reformation' in history which was leading to the universal fulfillment of God's eschatological purposes.¹⁰⁴ From this point of view, Woolman's eschatology is helpfully understood as a 'realising' eschatology because it was at once a present reality and still unfolding. While Woolman believed he was fully present in the

¹⁰² This is an important point, because Woolman's theology was conditioned by the alternative vision for society he believed God was enacting through him. This perspective led him to focus his spiritual energy on his apocalypticism, and not on a comprehensive and systematic theological system. See 5.3 and 5.1.

¹⁰³ For scholars who generalise Woolman's eschatology as 'millennial' and 'millenarian', see, Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 211–212; Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 169.

¹⁰⁴ See 4.1.2.

eschaton, he recognised that, for others, it was still germinating and unrecognised, and, thus, the *telos* of divine purposes had not fully reached its consummation. In other words, while he believed he was already a new creation in God's kingdom,¹⁰⁵ he believed himself to be part of the 'reformation' that was, as yet, still an ongoing event in salvation history.¹⁰⁶

The transitional nature of the eschaton, then, in which some were already in God's kingdom while others were, as yet, outside of it, demonstrates the importance of understanding Woolman as amillennial, for the kingdom itself was always present and realising and its eternal fulfillment and victory over apostasy was impending.¹⁰⁷ He did not preach a millennium as a distinct, future period of time in which the saints would reign, but as the eventual and inevitable inclusion of all people into God's kingdom on earth, as it was already experienced by members of the true Church, who were perfectly united to God's government in their hearts.¹⁰⁸

In Woolman's 1755 Epistle, which urged Quakers to resist involvement in the conflict between France and England, Woolman demonstrated the tension he felt at that time between the imminence of the eschaton and the human rebellion that opposed it.¹⁰⁹ Woolman argued that Quakers had already seen and experienced the security of the Spirit and so should act in accordance with what they profess, which, if held faithfully, would lead to more of the world being turned 'to the completion of those prophecies already begun.'¹¹⁰ Through obedience to God's revelation in regard to the impending

¹⁰⁵ See 4.1.3.

¹⁰⁶ See 4.1.2.

¹⁰⁷ See 4.1.1.

¹⁰⁸ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 455.

¹⁰⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 48-49.

¹¹⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 49.

'national contests',¹¹¹ Quakers could 'gradually' advance the kingdom.¹¹² Indeed, Woolman believed human action within history was eschatological because, through resistance to events like the French and Indian War, God had already begun to extend the peaceable kingdom on earth:

"from sea to sea and from river to the ends of the earth," to the completion of those prophecies already begun, that "nation shall not lift up sword against nation nor learn war any more." Is. 2:4; Zech. 9:10.

And dearly beloved Friends, seeing we have these promises and believe that God is beginning to fulfil them, let us constantly endeavour to have our minds sufficiently disentangled from the surfeiting cares of this life and redeemed from the love of this world that no earthly possessions nor enjoyments may bias our judgments or turn us from that resignation and entire trust in God to which his blessing is most surely annexed...¹¹³

Later, in 1755, Woolman and other signatories of another document, the 'Epistle of Tender Love and Caution',¹¹⁴ again returned to the notion of the fulfillment of eschatological prophecies in present day events. This time they focused on the payment of war-taxes:

we believe he hath renewedly favoured us with strong and lively evidences that in his due and appointed time, the day which hath dawned in these later ages foretold by the prophets wherein swords should be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks [Is. 2:4], shall gloriously rise higher and higher, and the spirit of the gospel which teaches to love enemies prevail to that degree that the art of war shall be no more learned, and that it is his determination to exalt this blessed day in this our age, if in the depth of humility we receive his instruction and obey his voice.¹¹⁵

Woolman, here, argued that Quakers must not participate in any aspect of the French and Indian War because it was a fallen, human conflict inconsistent with God's

¹¹¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 48.

¹¹² Woolman, 'Journal', 49.

¹¹³ Woolman, 'Journal', 49.

¹¹⁴ Gummere believes this Epistle was 'chiefly written by Woolman'. Gummere, ed., *Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, 52.

¹¹⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 85.

purposes.¹¹⁶ As a 'warrant'¹¹⁷ to justify this claim, Woolman argued that God's eschatological purposes could be fulfilled in the present moment and so actions inconsistent with the *telos* of divine intentions should be rejected: 'seeing we have these promises and believe that God is beginning to fulfil them...'¹¹⁸ and, 'it is his determination to exalt this blessed day in this our age.'¹¹⁹ He eschatologised the words of Isaiah and Zechariah by re-contextualising them into the impending, already initiated future in a way that legitimised his argument that it was no time to engage in military contests.¹²⁰ Thus, he used Isaiah and Zechariah to suggest they supported his argument that engagement in the French and Indian War was a rejection of the kingdom which was already present.¹²¹

In these passages, Woolman's eschatology took on social form because he believed that Quaker faithfulness meant being 'disentangled' from the war and that so doing would lead to Quaker participation in the spread of God's kingdom, 'the completion of those prophecies already begun.'¹²² Just as humans could participate in the spread of God's kingdom, so they could reject God's purposes. Thus, Woolman believed the future was in some way contingent on 'resignation' to God's purposes in the present.¹²³ The impending age of prosperity and peace in which swords were beaten into ploughshares and God's reign spread from coast to coast was already present in

¹¹⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 85.

¹¹⁷ Toulmin has identified 'warrants' as providing the grounds, or basis, for a particular line of argumentation. Stephen Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 98.

¹¹⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 49.

¹¹⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 85.

¹²⁰ See, Toulmin's concept of 'backing' in the support of arguments: Toulmin, *Uses of Argument*, 103–104.

¹²¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 49.

¹²² Woolman, 'Journal', 49.

¹²³ Woolman, 'Journal', 49.

potentiality, but invited human enactment for it to take on full form.¹²⁴ The hostilities between England and France and their ramifications for Quaker colonists, then, were, for Woolman and other Quaker reformers, palpable, historical events onto which eschatological longings were attached. God's kingdom was not clearly demarcated on an historical timeline because it was already fully present in the faithful, even as its universal recognition would occur in the future.¹²⁵

Stanley Frost considers Isaiah 2:2-4 to be the *locus classicus* for the 'Golden Age' form of Hebrew eschatology.¹²⁶ In the 'Golden Age' form,¹²⁷ hopes for agricultural prosperity, peace and the restoration of the pastoral, subsistence-farming-based social harmony that pertained in the Garden of Eden¹²⁸ were pressing on present day events as the culmination of divine protological design.¹²⁹ Woolman claimed that the final fulfillment of God's theologically-social purposes, represented in Isaiah's vision, were right in front of colonists and, in fact, had 'already begun'.¹³⁰

The contingent and impending nature of Woolman's eschatological vision in these 1755 Epistles also asserted the tenuous status of the present order, of which war and degeneracy were part. Within the claim that God's purposes could be fulfilled

¹²⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 49, 85.

¹²⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 49.

¹²⁶ Stanley Brice Frost, *Old Testament Apocalyptic, Its Origins and Growth* (London: Epworth Press, 1952), 237.

¹²⁷ Frost also identifies 'Better Age', 'Future Age' and 'Age to Come' forms. The former was not strictly eschatological because it did not envisage an absolute end to the current predicament. The last form asserts a supernatural order that transcends current historical forces; it is the most discontinuous eschatological form. The 'Golden Age' and 'Future Age' forms are the most common in prophetic literature. Both anticipate a kingdom established by divine intervention, but that retains a strong this-worldly flavour. Both are legitimately eschatological because they are 'absolute' in that the eschatological expectation is always in front of the people and does not recede with the passage of time. It signifies the final end of the current age. Frost, *Old Testament Apocalyptic*, 236–239; Stanley Brice Frost, 'Eschatology and Myth', *Vetus Testamentum* 2, no. 1 (January 1952): 77.

¹²⁸ See also, the agriculturally based imagery of the eschaton Woolman envisaged in 4.1.1 c).

¹²⁹ Frost, *Old Testament Apocalyptic*, 237.

¹³⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 49.

imminently was a prophetic counter-claim which delegitimised the present established order of imperial conflicts. Here, Woolman believed the universal and total domination of God's purposes, enacted by the faithful, reorientated and transformed the *status quo*, an apocalyptic hope that looked to the establishment of an alternative society in the kingdom of God.¹³¹ Woolman's 1755 Epistles served this purpose as well because they purport an already begun moment where God's will would sweep away fallen governments which would then be replaced by God's dominion alone. The imagery in Isaiah 2:2-4 provided an alternative vision of society over against the war-mongering¹³² of the mid-18th century.¹³³

Moreover, in 1772, Woolman wrote that, while the social order still had one foot in each world, he was firmly in a state under God's government and knew what it would take for the rest of the world to join him.¹³⁴ In a 1772 essay, he wrote:

From Age to Age, throughout all Ages, Divine Love is that alone in which Dominion has been, is, and will be rightly conducted.

In this the Endowments of Men are so employ'd [sic], that the Friend and the Governor are united in one, and oppressive Customs come to an end.

Riches in the Hands of Individuals in Society, is attended with some degree of Power; and so far as Power is put forth separate from pure Love, so far the Government of the Prince of peace is interrupted; and as we know not that our Children after us will dwell in that State in which Power is rightly applied, to lay up Riches for them appears to be against the Nature of his Government.¹³⁵

The 'Government of the Prince of peace', Woolman believed, was the reigning power

¹³¹ Bromley argues that apocalyptic shaped social and cultural identity and provided a way for dissenting communities to resist the current social order. Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 34–35.

¹³² For accounts of the disputes regarding the conflict between England and France in the Pennsylvania Assembly, see, Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism*, 180–181; Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 122; Kenny, *Peaceable Kingdom Lost*, 78–81; cf. 1.2.3.

¹³³ Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 37.

¹³⁴ See also, 4.1.3.

¹³⁵ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 493.

established through the 'Dominion' of God's love.¹³⁶ The government of Christ was already present, he claimed, but individuals and society could interrupt its dominion, if they acted outside of the divine revelation, or as he put it, when 'Power is put forth separate from pure Love.'¹³⁷ Oppressive labour practices, wealth accumulation and opulence were against the 'Nature of his Government', because they signified a rejection of God's perfect ordering of the 'visible Creation'.¹³⁸

In this passage, Woolman assumed that the government of Christ had already begun and been fulfilled in the human recipients of supernatural revelation. In the 'Dominion' of 'Divine Love' the faithful were in a state where 'oppressive Customs come to an end'.¹³⁹ Such 'customs'¹⁴⁰ could no longer be practised because of this new state, an alternative theologically-social ordering to the seemingly dominant apostate order. There is a note of completion and finality in this pronouncement because, under the reign of the government of Christ, the faithful were in a new dispensation in which slavery, wealth accumulation and immoderate labour were no longer viable.¹⁴¹ It is to this new reality, the end of 'oppressive customs', Woolman desired to direct his peers.¹⁴²

Thus, Woolman understood two ethics to be at work simultaneously: one was that of the sinful effects of the transatlantic marketplace, the other was that of God's governance. For Woolman, the government of Christ was a subversive state which ended sinful 'customs' and established 'Divine Love' as God's revealed activity in the world.¹⁴³ Karl Löwith argues that, in apocalyptic eschatologies, there is a tension at

¹³⁶ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 493.

¹³⁷ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 493.

¹³⁸ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 493.

¹³⁹ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 493.

¹⁴⁰ See 3.2.4.

¹⁴¹ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 493.

¹⁴² Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 493.

¹⁴³ For more on 'divine love', see 2.1.1.

work related to the practical reality of evil in the world: 'the time is already fulfilled and yet not consummated...On account of this profound ambiguity of the historical fulfillment where everything is "already" what it is "not yet," the Christian believer lives in a radical tension between present and future.'¹⁴⁴ Eschatological thought holds that behind the people and events of history, Löwith contends, invisible forces are raging.¹⁴⁵ Thus, in Woolman's case, the invisible government of Christ was already reigning and 'Divine Love' already had 'Dominion'.¹⁴⁶ However, there is that 'Power... put forth separate from pure Love', which was already broken and at an end, but still in existence in invisible, already defeated form.¹⁴⁷

Löwith's analysis of the ambiguity between the 'already' and 'not yet' is helpful for understanding the existence of dueling invisible forces,¹⁴⁸ but Woolman's eschatology contains a more pronounced degree of absoluteness: the day had come, the end of sin was at hand, the government of Christ was reigning, it was time for everyone to enter God's kingdom.¹⁴⁹ The moment of transformation, after which everything would be dramatically different, had arrived. Woolman's eschatology remained focused on *this-worldly* transformation, but, while the earth was the place where God's purposes would be fulfilled, he believed that the faithful could already behold the inevitable future, which is seen in his concept of the earth as the place of God's eschatological 'habitation'.

¹⁴⁴ Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 188.

¹⁴⁵ Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 188.

¹⁴⁶ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 493.

¹⁴⁷ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 493; Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 188.

¹⁴⁸ Löwith writes: 'Invisibly, history has fundamentally changed; visibly, it is still the same, for the Kingdom of God is already at hand, and yet, as an *eschaton*, still to come.'

Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 188.

¹⁴⁹ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 493.

b) 'Habitation' with God

For Woolman, 'habitation' was a state in which the faithful enjoyed a relationship with God as foretold in Revelation 8 and Isaiah 33.¹⁵⁰ It signified a spiritual state in which God invaded time and space to make the presence of the invisible government of Christ so perceptible as to be fully revealed through vision and mystical experience. Woolman described this 'habitation' both as present fact¹⁵¹ and impending reality.¹⁵² In either scenario, though, it functioned to delegitimate the present order by recreating 'temporal sequence'.¹⁵³ That is, Bromley argues, that, in apocalyptic thought, the righteous behaviour of the faithful could be maintained through 'predictions that are imminent but indeterminate, which then necessitates and legitimates a constant state of readiness'.¹⁵⁴

Woolman did not attempt to identify the precise way God's 'habitation' with humanity would be consummated, perhaps because its indeterminate nature reinforced his message concerning the fleeting benefits of greed and oppression.¹⁵⁵ Since the location of this state of 'habitation' was both in heaven and in the hearts of the faithful and the timing of the 'habitation' was both in the future and at every moment, Woolman believed the reign of God had already begun within time even as the reign of 'the world' appeared to be in control.¹⁵⁶ Thus, Woolman's eschatology suggests that, just as God's reign crossed dual planes of existence (heaven and earth), so 1) he was in a liminal state

¹⁵⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 160 fn. 6; Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 452-453.

¹⁵¹ Woolman, 'Journal Folio A.'

¹⁵² Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 452-453.

¹⁵³ Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 36.

¹⁵⁴ Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 36.

¹⁵⁵ Bromley contends that 'the effect is to create temporal liminality or intermediacy as the present is ending while the future has yet to be born. This creates inherent marginality for adherents who feel themselves to be standing poised on the brink of time.' Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 36.

¹⁵⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 452-453.

in God on the threshold between the eschaton and the world;¹⁵⁷ 2) this state of 'habitation' with God framed the world of human affairs with the supernatural revelation of God's eternal purposes; and, 3) through faithfulness to that revelation, the individual served as a harbinger of the age to come. These three elements shape the theogico-social implications of divine 'habitation' and are taken up in turn below.

1) A Liminal State

An example of this liminal and intermediary state is found in one of Woolman's visions during an attack of pleurisy in 1770.¹⁵⁸ In this vision, an angelic mediator¹⁵⁹ commissioned him to participate in eschatological events.¹⁶⁰ Thus, his earthly, temporal existence crossed for a time into an eschatological 'habitation' and then brought the meaning of the vision, if not the literal events, back into his this-worldly existence.¹⁶¹

The account of this experience in Woolman's *Journal* was heavily edited, either by Woolman or the editorial committee,¹⁶² so that it only exists in full in a crossed out section of a *Journal* manuscript¹⁶³ and in footnotes in Moulton's critical edition of the *Journal*.¹⁶⁴ Quoted in its original entirety, with the redacted portion in brackets, the experience reads:

The place of prayer is a precious habitation, for I now saw [and the seventh seal was opened, and for a certain time there was silence in heaven; and I saw an angel with a golden censer, and he offered with it incense with the prayers of the saints, and it rose up before the throne. I saw] that the prayers of the saints was precious incense. And a trumpet

¹⁵⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 160.

¹⁵⁸ Woolman, 'Journal Folio A.'

¹⁵⁹ The mediation of otherworldly beings is a common feature of apocalyptic writing. Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', 7.

¹⁶⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 160.

¹⁶¹ Woolman, 'Journal Folio A.'

¹⁶² Woolman, 'Journal', 160 fn. 5, fn. 6.

¹⁶³ Woolman, 'Journal Folio A.'

¹⁶⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 160.

was given me that I might sound forth this language, that the children might hear it and be invited to gather to this precious habitation, where the prayers of saints, as precious incense, ariseth up before the throne of God and the Lamb. I saw this habitation to be safe, to be inwardly quiet, when there was great stirrings and commotions in the world. Prayer at this day in pure resignation is a precious place. The trumpet is sounded; the call goes forth to the church that she gather to the place of pure inward prayer, and her habitation is safe.¹⁶⁵

Here, Woolman had a vision of the true Church¹⁶⁶ gathered at the foot of the glorified Christ offering prayers and incense, as described in Revelation 8:1-4.¹⁶⁷ This biblical passage occurs directly after the seventh seal was opened by the Lamb and the book was opened portraying the vindication of the saints, who were represented wearing white robes, cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, in God's direct, unmediated presence.¹⁶⁸ After the seventh seal was opened, there was silence in heaven for half an hour in which the saints beheld God's glory and seven angels prepared to blow the seven trumpets of God's wrath.¹⁶⁹ Interestingly, in Woolman's vision in the *Journal*, a trumpet is handed to him 'that I might sound forth this language, that the children might hear it and be invited to gather to this precious habitation, where the prayers of saints, as precious incense, ariseth up before the throne of God and the Lamb' in the midst of 'great stirrings and commotions in the world.'¹⁷⁰ In other words, just as in Revelation, the angels blew the trumpets of God's wrath and rallied the saints, so, in his vision, Woolman himself called the Church to a position of direct mystical intimacy with God in the midst of world occurrence.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁵ Woolman, 'Journal Folio A.'

¹⁶⁶ See 2.2.1.

¹⁶⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 160, 160 fn. 6.

¹⁶⁸ See, Revelation 7:13-17.

¹⁶⁹ See, Revelation 8:1-6.

¹⁷⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 160.

¹⁷¹ Fox also used this passage to describe Quakers as the true Church, those gathered around the Lamb and under the Lamb's direct government. George Fox, *The Works of George Fox*, vol. v (Philadelphia: Marcus T. C. Gould, 1831), 131; see also, 2.1.

Like the author of the Book of Revelation, Saint John, Woolman described himself as a witness and participant to/in these heavenly events as they occurred. Woolman's vision is replete with typological inferences. He implied that God's faithful in the world were the white robed saints of heaven, that the act of this-worldly prayer was the incense offered by the saints in the heavenly realm and that his prophetic ministry was the trumpet that called forth the Church for the consummation of God's purposes.¹⁷² He used this typological interpretation¹⁷³ of Revelation 7 and 8 to orientate his own actions eschatologically.¹⁷⁴ It was common for Woolman to use biblical events, such as the tower of Babel, as typologies for the spiritual condition of his present situation.¹⁷⁵ However, in this passage, Woolman claimed that faithful actions in this world represented a type of living in the eschaton itself. In this typology, the relationship between what was the state of affairs in the 18th century and what was yet to be in the eschaton, was not simply a matter of 'historical sequence'.¹⁷⁶ Rather, both were already present in time itself and, thus, a unity existed between the future fulfillment envisioned in Revelation 7 and 8 and the latent, implicit, potential known to

¹⁷² Woolman, 'Journal Folio A.'

¹⁷³ The line between 'typology' and 'allegory' is fine. For my purposes, the difference between 'typology' and 'allegory' is that the former refers to symbolic comparisons between historical events. For Woolman the prayer of 18th century Christians was a 'type' and contemporary fulfillment of Saint John's vision on Patmos. An allegory is the interpretive device by which one thing comes to signify another unrelated thing; see, Anthony Tyrrell Hanson 'Typology', *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, eds. Oxford University Press Inc. 1993. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Seattle Public Library. 27 March 2012 <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t120.e0747>>; 'allegory', *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. ed. E. A. Livingstone. Oxford University Press, 2006. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Seattle Public Library. 27 March 2012 <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t95.e175>>.

¹⁷⁴ There is a tradition of eschatological typology in Christian theology. Irenaeus used passages from the Hebrew prophets as a typology of what the faithful will experience in the millenary reign of Christ. Manlio Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 22.

¹⁷⁵ See his use of 'Babel' in Appendix B.

¹⁷⁶ Downing, 'Eschatological Theology', 18.

those who dwelled in God's 'habitation'.¹⁷⁷

The real presence of the kingdom, Woolman believed, meant that those under its rule would experience a 'habitation', or state of being, that was an earthly fulfillment of the vision in Revelation 8.¹⁷⁸ This 'habitation' was an alternative this-worldly order, hidden from most, but revealed by God to the true saints and which enabled a perfect obedience through which God's eschatological purposes could be enacted.¹⁷⁹ He did not proclaim the content of this vision just in his journal.¹⁸⁰ Two years later, British Friend, Elihu Robinson, recorded the following, after Woolman preached at London Yearly Meeting: '[Woolman] made several beautiful remarks in this meeting with respect to the benefit of true silence, and how incense ascended on the opening of the seventh seal, and there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour, etc.'¹⁸¹ It is difficult to tell what details of this vision Woolman proclaimed, based on Robinson's brief summary, but it is sufficient to say the imagery of Revelation 8 featured in Woolman's preaching in 1772. The fact that Woolman sought to make this vision public would not be surprising, if Woolman took seriously the angelic commission to gather the world 'to this precious habitation'.¹⁸²

2) Framing the World of Human Affairs

At about the same time as the pleurisy attack in 1770, Woolman's essay, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind and how it is to be Maintained', was

¹⁷⁷ See, Downing's description of the typological interpretations within the prophetic imagination: Downing, 'Eschatological Theology', 18; Woolman, 'Journal Folio A.'

¹⁷⁸ Woolman, 'Journal Folio A.'

¹⁷⁹ Woolman, 'Journal Folio A.'

¹⁸⁰ Cadbury, *John Woolman in England*, 70.

¹⁸¹ Cadbury, *John Woolman in England*, 70.

¹⁸² Woolman, 'Journal Folio A.'

published. This essay challenged colonists to submit 'commerce'¹⁸³ to the will of God and dwell in a perfected 'habitation' in which God's eschatological purposes on earth would be enacted in order to spread God's kingdom in the world.¹⁸⁴ In other words, Woolman believed that God had revealed right and wrong not only for individuals, but for the world. Elsewhere, Woolman wrote that 'fresh and heavenly openings' from God were fundamental to his respect for humanity and motivation for acting in the world.¹⁸⁵ 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind' described not just a path for spiritual purity, but a state of social transformation through the direct intervention of 'the powerful operation of the Spirit of Christ' in the faithful.¹⁸⁶

In one passage, Woolman described the spirit of his day in terms of Babylon and Babel.¹⁸⁷ Here, Woolman used the city of Babylon, as described in the book of Revelation, as a typological representation of the transatlantic marketplace.¹⁸⁸ Babel, as described in the book of Genesis, marked humanity's rebellious turn away from the primordial intimacy which had previously existed between God and humanity.¹⁸⁹

Woolman believed that the economic disparities occasioned by the transatlantic economy, 'which tend to oppression' and 'unequitable burdens', created suffering among the oppressed and fear of reprisal among the oppressors.¹⁹⁰ And 'thus the harmony of society is broken; and from hence commotions and wars do frequently arise in the world.'¹⁹¹ In Woolman's vocabulary, 'harmony' was most often used to describe the state

¹⁸³ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 440.

¹⁸⁴ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444-445, 451.

¹⁸⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 32.

¹⁸⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 455.

¹⁸⁷ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444-445.

¹⁸⁸ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444-445.

¹⁸⁹ See Genesis 11; see also, Appendix B.

¹⁹⁰ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444.

¹⁹¹ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444.

of intimacy between God and his creation which was intended by God from the beginning.¹⁹² Woolman felt convinced that the burgeoning transatlantic slave economy had created a system of winners and losers, the winners were characterised by opulence and the losers by being oppressed.¹⁹³ Both winners and losers, Woolman argued, were alienated from the Light and Life of Christ.¹⁹⁴

However, the degeneration of social harmony was not human destiny.¹⁹⁵ Instead, Woolman felt that another vision for society was on the horizon, one in which economics and spirituality would be governed by the 'Light'.¹⁹⁶ The conflict between the God-ordered and God-directed society in which Christ ruled all aspects of human interaction whether religious or economic, and what Woolman came to believe were the idolatrous social structures of his day,¹⁹⁷ can be seen through Woolman's belief that God's will would be established on earth to overthrow the corruptions of the present order.¹⁹⁸

In the book of Revelation, Babylon's destruction was unfolding before the Apostle, a judgment described in primarily economic terms: 'For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.'¹⁹⁹ Woolman carefully focused his interpretation of this

¹⁹² See 4.1 and Appendix B for Woolman's vision of the restoration of social harmony; see also, Woolman, 'Conversations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 471; Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 485-487.

¹⁹³ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444.

¹⁹⁴ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444.

¹⁹⁵ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 443.

¹⁹⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 448-449.

¹⁹⁷ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 451.

¹⁹⁸ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444-445.

¹⁹⁹ Revelation 18:3.

passage on the merchants and Babylon as an economic centre: 'this City [sic] is represented as a place of business, those employed in it, as merchants of the Earth.'²⁰⁰ For Woolman, Babylon was not just a city, but a system of trade, oppression and wealth accumulation rooted in empire and market economics.²⁰¹ This typological interpretation illustrates Woolman's particular theological perspective on the issues of his day, for many colonial theologians believed 'Babylon' referred to the Papacy and its destruction, not the slave economy.²⁰²

The eschatological metaphor of Babylon in Revelation, Woolman claimed, was fully represented in the transatlantic marketplace.²⁰³ Colonial merchants, both Quaker and non-Quaker, fed the beast, which the economic system had become, exploiting and transporting material resources required for human sustenance to England in exchange

²⁰⁰ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 445.

²⁰¹ In 1715, New Jersey antislavery Quaker, John Hepburn, published an attack against slavery in which he compared the merchants involved in the slave trade with the merchants of Babylon: 'Now the buying and selling of the Bodies and Souls of Men, was and is the Merchandise of the Babylonish Merchants spoken of in the Revelations.' It is not known whether or not Woolman had access to Hepburn's tract. While Hepburn focused on the slave trade itself, Woolman expanded the typology to include the entire transatlantic system. John Hepburn, *The American Defence of the Christian Golden Rule* ([New York], 1715), 2.

²⁰² Leroy Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, vol. 3 (Washington: Review and Herald, 1946), 139; See, for example: 'Are you so ignorant, as not to know that all the Papists in *France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Poland, Italy, and Rome* it self (the Seat of the Whore of Babylon) do practise Infant-sprinkling as well as you?' John Sharp, *Truth Prevailing Against the Fiercest Opposition being a Vindication of Dr. Russel's True Narrative of the Portsmouth Disputation*, (London: Printed, and sold by M. Fabian ..., 1700), 66. 'That the *Roman Church* was not it [the true Church]; for that was but *Babylon*, the Mystery of Iniquity, the Plague of God upon the World for not receiving the Love of Divine Truth.' John Lightfoot, *Some Genuine Remains of the Late Pious and Learned John Lightfoot, D.D.*, (LONDON: Printed by R. J. for J. Robinson, at the Golden-Lion; and J. Wyat, at the Rose in St. Paul's Church-yard, MDCC), 248. 'That all Things, which are predicted in the Revelation, are at this Day fulfilled, may be seen...It follows now to declare, how it was accomplished on the Papists, who are understood by Babylon, which is much treated of in Revelation, particularly its Destruction in Chap. Xviii.' Emanuel Swedenborg, *A Treatise Concerning the Last Judgment, and the Destruction of Babylon: shewing that all the predictions contained in the Revelation, are at this day Fulfilled. Being A Testimony of Things Heard and Seen. Translated from the Latin of the Hon. Emanuel Swedenborg. Originally published in the year 1758.* (London: printed and sold by R. Hindmarsh, Printer To His Royal Highness The Prince Of Wales, No. 32, Clerkenwell-Close. Sold also by J. Denis, No. 2, New Bridge Street, Black-Friars; and I. and W. Clarke, Manchester, 1788), 99.

²⁰³ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 445.

for gold currency and luxury goods.²⁰⁴ Woolman felt this trade system deprived the poor of necessities and dangerously clogged the spirits of the wealthy with greed.²⁰⁵ The strength of the British Empire had ensured the security of trade routes and markets enabling the growth of luxury trade and, thereby, created new wealth for some.²⁰⁶ However, as Woolman saw it, this economy manifested 'self-love', built on the backs of slaves and the poor, a rejection of the divine vision for society.²⁰⁷ The seduction of political power and economic prosperity, Woolman insisted, involved the idolatrous worship of 'mammon', an uncompromising confidence in one's own resources without any sense of dependence on God.²⁰⁸ As Woolman quoted, 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon.'²⁰⁹

Woolman treated the colonial 'Babylon' with eschatological weight similar to that with which Saint John treated the Roman Empire.²¹⁰ In Revelation 18, God called the Church to 'Come out of Babylon my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.'²¹¹ Woolman quoted this passage word for word and, thus, suggested that the judgments on the colonial 'Babylon' were both impending and already decided with finality.²¹² However, God had opened a way for humanity to join with God's eschatological purposes: 'As we faithfully attend to the call', Woolman wrote, 'the path of righteousness is more and more opened; cravings which have not

²⁰⁴ For a discussion of Woolman's condemnation of merchandising, see 3.2.1.

²⁰⁵ Woolman, 'Conversations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 469, 471.

²⁰⁶ May, *Enlightenment in America*, 30.

²⁰⁷ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 202-203.

²⁰⁸ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 446.

²⁰⁹ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 446.

²¹⁰ For a discussion of the representation of Rome as 'Babylon' in Revelation and, particularly, Revelation 18, see, M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1989), 185ff.

²¹¹ Revelation 18:4.

²¹² Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444.

their foundation in pure wisdom, more and more cease.²¹³ For Woolman, intentional human steps in response to God's revelation signified the realising of a this-worldly eschaton, signaled by the graduated language: 'more and more opened...more and more cease.'²¹⁴ On one hand, gradual, realising language seems to diminish the urgency of Woolman's eschatology. How can God's righteousness be 'more and more opened' and sin 'more and more cease'? It would seem God's righteousness could either be opened or not and sin could either have ceased or not. In fact, Woolman's gradual, realising language reinforced the sense of 'temporal liminality'²¹⁵ in which the world existed on the brink of the eschaton and, thus, the inward *parousia* and judgment of sin could occur at any moment. The increasing power of 'righteousness' correlated exactly with the decreasing influence of rebellious 'cravings'.²¹⁶ As the true Church exited the degenerate Babylon-system, individuals and society as a whole experienced the perfecting influence of the Spirit's presence and leadership:²¹⁷

For though in going forth [from Babylon] we may meet with tryals [sic] which for a time may be painful; yet as we bow in true humility, and continue in it, an evidence is felt that God only is wise, and that in weaning us from all that is selfish he prepares the way to a quiet habitation, where all our desires are bounded by his wisdom. And an exercise of Spirit attends me, that we who are convinced of the pure leadings of Truth, may bow in the deepest reverence, and so watchfully regard this Leader, that many who are grievously entangled in a wilderness of vain customs, may look upon us, and be instructed. And O! that such who have plenty of this worlds goods, may be faithful in that with which they are entrusted, and example others in the true Christian walking!²¹⁸

²¹³ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 445.

²¹⁴ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 445.

²¹⁵ Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 36.

²¹⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 445.

²¹⁷ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 445.

²¹⁸ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 445.

The exit from Babylon had two purposes: firstly, it signified a literal 'restoration of that which was lost at Babel', the return of the pre-lapsarian condition on earth.²¹⁹ This state of 'quiet habitation' entailed a direct and perfect obedience to divine revelation in this life.²²⁰ Secondly, the 'example' of the faithful would evangelise the world²²¹ and spread the kingdom on earth.²²² The exodus from Babylon emerged through steps of obedience to the 'openings' of the divine 'Leader', with the end being the inauguration of God's reign on earth in direct rule of the hearts of the faithful; an actuality which entailed a complete rejection of 'selfish' and 'vain' political and economic systems and social relations.²²³ Woolman eschatologised the events and circumstances of the 18th century in a way that called the faithful to perseverance and strength as part of the final, but as yet, unfolding, eschatological battle.²²⁴ He also held out in front of colonists the prospect that God's patience was limited, just as Revelation 18 foretold the impending destruction of Babylon, if there was no repentance.²²⁵ The *realising* eschatological event was, nonetheless, imbued with the *urgency* of obedient response and the peril of being opposed to God's purposes.

Since Woolman advocated that colonists should exit Babylon at that very moment, his suggestion that, once it was done, they could enter a 'quiet habitation, where all our desires are bounded by his wisdom', likewise appears to be an immediate expectation.²²⁶ In this way the properties of God's governance – such as peace,

²¹⁹ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 445.

²²⁰ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 445.

²²¹ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 445.

²²² Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 441, 445.

²²³ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 445.

²²⁴ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444-445.

²²⁵ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444-445.

²²⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444-445.

obedience and humility – would be enacted on earth in the moment.²²⁷ However, later in this essay, Woolman casts the vision of God's habitation into the heavenly realm, which cannot be grasped in the present state of things, but only glimpsed from afar.²²⁸ In other words, Woolman alternated the eschatological location of the divine 'habitation' in a way that reinforced the 'temporal liminality'²²⁹ of the present moment and highlighted the way the heavenly-spiritual realm touched down on earth through the faithful.²³⁰ Because 'habitation' with God was already a possibility, Woolman believed sin to be transitory:²³¹ 'And where they know that wickedness is committed, [God] points out their care, how they do not by an unguarded friendship with the Authors of it, appear like unconcerned lookers on, but as people so deeply affected with Sorrow, that they cannot endure to stand by and behold it.'²³² The faithful who perceive such sin, Woolman argued, are unable to participate in it, or even accept it tacitly, because God's 'habitation' was visible on the spiritual horizon and already present in the government of Christ, even if its universal consummation was temporally indeterminate:

And as our Saviour mentions the sight of God to be attainable by *the pure in heart*, so here the prophet pointed out how in true Sanctification the understanding is opened to behold the peaceable, harmonious nature of his kingdom; "thine Eyes shall see the king in his beauty." And that looking beyond all the afflictions which attend the righteous, to a habitation eternal in the heavens, they, with an eye divinely open, "shall behold the land that is very far off."

"He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." Isaiah xxxiii. 16, 17.²³³

²²⁷ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444-445.

²²⁸ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 453.

²²⁹ Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 36.

²³⁰ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 453.

²³¹ See 3.2.4.

²³² Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 452.

²³³ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 453. Emphasis is original.

Woolman indicated that the state where 'the sight of God' was attainable, the 'kingdom' revealed and God's eternal 'habitation' made visible, was a present day reality for the *'pure in heart'*, who had experienced 'true Sanctification'.²³⁴ Here, the relationship between Woolman's theology of perfection and eschatology is illumined; a single attention to God's revelation transformed the recipient of divine revelation such that they could perceive and understand the true nature of the world as it truly was and God's intended purposes for it.²³⁵ However, at this point, Woolman claimed that the divine 'habitation' was only visible *'beyond all the afflictions'* of the earthly life, in a realm that is still 'very far off'.²³⁶ Woolman had to wrestle with the practical reality that, even if he felt God's kingdom present in himself, there were plenty of people who existed outside of the kingdom, whose actions disobeyed God's intentions and who persecuted the faithful. In other words, while God had revealed to the faithful what the 'habitation' would look like, it was still only fully realisable in the future because Christ's reign was not universally actualised at the present moment.²³⁷

At first glance, this sequence of events seems to conflict with his earlier statement that immediate departure from 'Babylon' would lead directly to a 'quiet habitation' in this life, characterised by enactment of God's precepts.²³⁸ However, in fact, he believed the faithful were already transformed into a renewed state and dwelled in the divine 'habitation' on earth because Christ reigned in their hearts. Yet, he acknowledged the continual existence of sin in the world and encouraged the true Church to faithfulness because sin would eventually be overcome and the world united

²³⁴ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 453.

²³⁵ See more in 4.2.

²³⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 453. Emphasis is mine.

²³⁷ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 453.

²³⁸ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 445.

in the still unfolding 'habitation'.²³⁹ Thus, while Woolman and the faithful could already experience the realities of the eschaton and, through their actions the eschaton took practical and comprehensive form, they still contended with the apostate whose eschatological destiny was not yet decided.

Those who faithfully obeyed would be vindicated in the present with a this-worldly experience of God's redemptive destiny for humanity. Whether this experience meant the faithful would enter the 'habitation' depicted in Revelation 8 in the present moment, or only gain a glimpse of its future universal completion in this life, the effect was to subvert worldly standards of behaviour with the claims of divine revelation. Since living in the eschaton was both available now and not yet to the faithful, divine revelation required absolute trust in God in a way that energised the behaviour Woolman thought consistent with God's kingdom and motivated urgent response because God's timing was unknown.²⁴⁰ Human existence on earth, then, was fully eschatological because individual actions either participated in God's ultimate purposes or rebelled against them.²⁴¹ The consequences of human behaviour in either case had eschatological ramifications.²⁴²

3) A Harbinger of the Age to Come

Woolman understood Christ's government to provide a state of eschatological habitation for the faithful in this life, which positioned the faithful as harbingers of God's universal reign. In his 1772 letter, 'An Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', Woolman articulated a concern about what he considered to be the

²³⁹ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 453.

²⁴⁰ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 453.

²⁴¹ See 4.1.2.

²⁴² See 4.1.2.

false testimony of some Quaker ministers.²⁴³ The falsity of their ministry was not based on the theological content of their preaching, but rather that Woolman thought the ministers themselves were not completely dependent on divine revelation for their message. Instead, Woolman said they 'would rise up and do something in the visible gathered church without the pure leadings of Christ', in a prideful spirit.²⁴⁴ In contrast, Woolman argued that 'an inward stillness' and 'true silence' were necessary to live perfectly in the 'Divine Will' such that the minister spoke God's words alone and only then could advance the kingdom.²⁴⁵ This was yet another reference to Revelation 8, where the faithful dwelled in direct intimacy with God before the throne, where 'that silence is known, which followeth the opening of the last of the seals' and God's will is fully realised in them.²⁴⁶

Here, the state of 'habitation' with God would be known by the minister united with God, and, out of that state, the minister 'promoted' only what was consistent with Christ's 'government'.²⁴⁷ Woolman carefully identified the location of false ministry as the '*visible* gathered church', because, for those in the government of Christ, only that which coincided with God's will could exist, just as, in the imagery of Revelation 8,

²⁴³ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 483–484; see also, discussion of 'Concerning the Ministry' in 4.3.

²⁴⁴ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 484.

²⁴⁵ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 483–484.

²⁴⁶ Woolman's wrote:

But when our minds entirely yield to Christ, that silence is known, which followeth the opening of the last of the seals. Rev. viii. I. In this silence we learn a patient abiding in the Divine Will, and there feel, that we have no cause to promote but that only in which the Light of Life directs us in our proceedings, and that the only way to be useful in the church of Christ, is to abide faithfully under the leadings of his holy spirit in all cases, that therein being preserved in purity of heart and holiness of conversation, a testimony to the purity of his government may be held forth through us to others.

Fox used Revelation 7 and 8 to describe the state of Quakers, cleansed by Christ, and the judgment to be brought on their enemies. Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 484; Fox, *Works*, vol. 5, 131.

²⁴⁷ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 484.

only true worship was possible because of God's presence.²⁴⁸ In this state, the faithful experienced a perfect union of will with God so that they could 'hold forth' Christ's 'government'.²⁴⁹ Indeed, Woolman believed that the witness of the faithful, in which the faithful lived in the state of the saints before God's throne, served as a harbinger that would evangelise others 'when such seekers who are wearied with empty forms, look towards uniting with us as a people...'²⁵⁰ However, if seekers observed Quakers living antithetically to God's revealed will, such seekers would be discouraged: 'and how strongly doth such unfaithfulness operate against the spreading of the peaceable, harmonious principle and testimony of Truth amongst mankind?'²⁵¹

On the other hand, Woolman claimed that by 'entering' what Woolman elsewhere called a 'habitation', the 'peaceable government of Christ' is made visible before the world.²⁵² For those under the rule of Christ's government, Woolman claimed, war was no longer possible because they existed in 'the quietness'²⁵³ which he had, just a page earlier, identified with the state of the saints before the throne of God in Revelation 8.²⁵⁴

In Woolman's apocalyptic theology, the eschatological horizon was both present, in a way that redefined human behaviour, and impending, in its full global realization, so

²⁴⁸ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 483–484. Emphasis is mine.

²⁴⁹ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 484; see also, 3.2.2.

²⁵⁰ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 485.

²⁵¹ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 485.

²⁵² Woolman wrote:

In entering into that life which is hid with Christ in God, we behold the peaceable government of Christ, where the whole family are governed by the same spirit and doing to others as we would they should do unto us groweth up as good fruit from a good tree. The peace the quietness and harmonious walking in his government, is beheld with humble reverence to Him who is the author of it, and in partaking of the Spirit of Christ, we partake of that which labours, and suffers for the increase of this peaceable government amongst the inhabitants of the world. And I have felt a labour of long continuance that we who profess this peaceable principle, may be faithful standard-bearers under the prince of peace, and that nothing of a defiling nature tending to discord and wars, may remain amongst us.

Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 485–486.

²⁵³ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 485.

²⁵⁴ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 484.

that those under the government of Christ were always in a temporally tenuous state as harbingers of the age to come. They were at once already realising the fulfillment of God's purposes, while at the same time they 'exampled'²⁵⁵ God's eschatological purposes working for 'the increase of this peaceable government amongst the inhabitants of the world.'²⁵⁶ Christ's government could be known spiritually by the faithful, whose lives were 'hid with Christ in God' through divine revelation, while still existing universally only in its spreading and realising form.²⁵⁷

Woolman concluded 'An Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends' by writing that the state of 'habitation' with God redeemed humanity from the 'tribulation' of a life 'in that spirit in which those iniquities were committed [*sic*].'²⁵⁸ He believed this message to be a missionising one because humanity would be 'gathered to this peaceable habitation':²⁵⁹

Tender compassion fills my heart toward my fellow-creatures estranged from the harmonious government of the prince of peace, and a labour attends me that many may be gathered to this peaceable habitation. In being inwardly prepared to suffer adversities for Christ's sake, and weaned from a dependence on the arm of flesh, we feel that there is a rest for the people of God, and that this rest stands in a perfect resignation of ourselves to his Will.

This condition where all our wants and desires are bounded by pure wisdom, and our minds wholly attentive to the inward council of Christ, hath appeared to me as a habitation of safety for the Lord's people in time of outward commotion & trouble and desires from the fountain of Love, are opened in me to invite my brethren and fellow-creatures to feel for that which gathers the mind into it.²⁶⁰

Woolman links the 'harmonious government' of Christ and 'habitation' with God in the spiritual realm to a 'condition where all our wants and desires are bounded by pure

²⁵⁵ See 3.2.2.

²⁵⁶ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 485.

²⁵⁷ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 485.

²⁵⁸ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 487.

²⁵⁹ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 487.

²⁶⁰ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 487.

wisdom.²⁶¹ Human behaviours in the outward, physical realm were, ultimately, governed by the inward 'government' of Christ.²⁶² Thus, even as the fullness of Christ's kingdom was still unfolding on a global scale, its presence in the hearts of the true believers established its reign on earth because they could no longer live in a sinful, alienated state.²⁶³ Woolman felt that this transformation of the individual occurred through 'resignation'²⁶⁴ to God's purposes, which, here, explicitly refers to a this-worldly experience of direct presence with God and practical embodiments which enact God's reign in human affairs.²⁶⁵

God's kingdom, Woolman felt, not only entailed the spiritual component of direct habitation with God,²⁶⁶ but it also involved a creation-centric understanding of redemption. Woolman looked back to the 'harmony' of the creation to inform what he thought to be the peace and prosperity of the eschaton. This is similar to his protology,²⁶⁷ but, here, focused on those aspects that relate specifically to the transformed new age God was establishing on earth.

c) The Peaceable Kingdom

Woolman's theology of the kingdom of God was built on ideas about 1) gathered community, 2) right-relationship with God, and 3) right-relationship among the living inhabitants of God's creation.²⁶⁸ Firstly, Woolman felt commissioned to 'gather' the

²⁶¹ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 487; see also, 2.2.

²⁶² Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 487.

²⁶³ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 487.

²⁶⁴ See 2.1.1.

²⁶⁵ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 487.

²⁶⁶ See also 2.1.

²⁶⁷ See 4.1 and Appendix B.

²⁶⁸ Chamberlain contends that the biblical vision of the kingdom of God is 'a social concept' in that it is not *limited* geographically, nor is it *solely* focused on 'a one-to-one relationship between a believer and the believer's Savior.' John Chamberlain, 'The Spiritual Impetus to Community', in *Utopias: the American Experience*, ed. Otto Kraushaar and Gairdner Moment (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press,

faithful to embody the alternative corporate testimony which he thought was consistent with God's purposes.²⁶⁹ Secondly, his 1772 'An Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends' was written to emphasise the importance of loving discipline among Quakers, so that Friends would be 'active in dealing with such who walk disorderly'.²⁷⁰ For Woolman, appropriate, God-inspired discipline among Quakers had a perfecting influence,²⁷¹ which was part of bringing about God's kingdom, for discipline encouraged the lapsed into a right-relationship with God.²⁷² While Woolman certainly desired that Quakers should become a community that reflected the kingdom of God, as evidenced by his many travels among Quakers and this Epistle,²⁷³ he maintained that God was actively bringing forth a faithful community which transcended credal affiliation.²⁷⁴ In this way, he embodied his conviction that the 'reformation' of God's spreading kingdom would encompass all people.²⁷⁵ Woolman was not focused on his individual afterlife but, in apocalyptic fashion, believed God's purposes necessarily entailed a collective destiny worked out in a this-worldly theatre of eschatologically charged historical events.²⁷⁶ Thirdly, Woolman proclaimed the importance of right-relationship between humans and material objects and the creation and among humanity through his prophetic ministry.²⁷⁷ His theologically-social vision included fair labour practices,²⁷⁸ just treatment of animals²⁷⁹ and payment of wages to slaves²⁸⁰ because all

²⁶⁹ 1980), 136.

²⁷⁰ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 487; see also, 4.1.1.

²⁷¹ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 476.

²⁷² See 4.2.

²⁷³ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 484; see also, 4.1.1.

²⁷⁴ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 484.

²⁷⁵ See 2.2.1.

²⁷⁶ See 4.1.2.

²⁷⁷ Robbins and Palmer, 'Introduction', 6.

²⁷⁸ See chapter 3.

²⁷⁹ See 3.2.

²⁸⁰ See 2.2.1.

²⁸⁰ See 3.2.3.

these things were the social corollaries of his belief that the inbreaking reign of God's intentions for human affairs was unfolding around him and already present in the faithful.

Woolman's theology demonstrated that the spiritual and the material could not be separated. He believed he learned truths about the kingdom of God in visionary experiences²⁸¹ as well as in the very practical ways people organised their lives and the priorities established by society. For example, he equated life in cities with commercial and industrial practices he thought tended towards luxury. These practices, he said, clouded the mind from perceiving the revelation of the kingdom:

The conditions of many who dwell in cities, hath often affected me with a brotherly sympathy, attended with a desire that resignation may be laboured for, and where the Leader directeth to a Country life, or some change of employ, he may be faithfully followed; for under the refining hand of the Lord, I have seen that the inhabitants of some cities are greatly increased through some branches of business which his holy Spirit doth not lead into, and that being entangled in these things, tends to bring a cloud over the minds of people convinced of the leading of this holy Leader, and obstructs the coming of the Kingdom of Christ on earth as it is in heaven.²⁸²

In Woolman's theology, the 'Kingdom of Christ' was ready to break into the world, but could be 'obstructed' for a time due to human rebellion.²⁸³ As an example, he observed in urban centres, 'some branches of business' which God 'doth not lead into', such that

²⁸¹ See 2.1.2 and 4.1.1.

²⁸² Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 441; Similarly, while walking in England in 1772, he condemned the filth and stench of cities and equated rural life with obedience to God's revelation:

Near large towns there are many beasts slain to supply the market, and from their blood, etc., ariseth that which mixeth in the air. This, with the cleaning of many stables and other scents, the air in cities in a calm wettish time is so opposite to the clear pure country air that I believe even the minds of people are in some degree hindered from the pure operation of the Holy Spirit, where they breathe a great deal in it. *With God* all things are possible, and the sincere in heart find help under the greatest difficulties, but I believe if Truth be singly attended to, way may open for some to live a country life who now are in cities.

Woolman, 'Journal', 190. Emphasis is original.

²⁸³ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 441.

the divine revelation was obscured.²⁸⁴ Here he articulated how social human behaviour can have spiritual repercussions. He believed that a rural, farming based life-style was more conducive to God's kingdom 'on earth as it is in heaven'²⁸⁵ and that some people should move back to 'a Country life'.²⁸⁶ It would take a special revelation from God to justify moving from the country to the city, Woolman thought, whereas the 'Country life' needed no such justification.²⁸⁷

Cities received much of Woolman's ire against slavery due to his observation that the 'oppressive channels' of the 18th century slave-economy centred on the port cities.²⁸⁸ He called the economic system that existed in these urban ports a 'deviation... from that simplicity that is in Christ', 'unrighteousness' and a 'revolt' from God's intention, such that a 'reformation' was necessary in society to bring people into a state in which:²⁸⁹

we might come to that right use of things where, living on a little, we might inhabit that holy mountain on which they neither *hurt nor destroy!* and may not only stand clear from oppressing our fellow creatures, but may be so disentangled from connections in interest with known oppressors, that in us may be fulfilled that prophecy: 'Thou shalt be far from oppression' [Is. 54:14]. Under the weight of this exercise the sight of innocent birds in the branches and sheep in the pastures, who act according to the will of their Creator, hath at times tended to mitigate my trouble.²⁹⁰

Woolman interwove his condemnation of urban apostasy with Isaiah's eschatological vision of an impending age of agrarian harmony where farmers would not have to worry about the predation of their flocks.²⁹¹ In Isaiah 11, the prophet proclaimed that a new

²⁸⁴ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 441.

²⁸⁵ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 441; see 2.2.2.

²⁸⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 441; see 2.2.2.

²⁸⁷ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 441; see 2.2.2.

²⁸⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 185.

²⁸⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 185.

²⁹⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 185. Emphasis is original.

²⁹¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 185.

age of justice, the peaceable kingdom, would break into the world and peace would be established among the creation as wolf and lamb, leopard and kid, child and asp coexisted in harmony.²⁹² In this age, God's purposes would be universally acknowledged and every geographic location would be the place of God's presence, just as the Temple on Zion was previously recognised as the location of God's presence: 'They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.'²⁹³ Similarly, this vision is reflected later in Isaiah with the same dual promises of agricultural prosperity and the direct presence of God: 'The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.'²⁹⁴

The apostasies of the transatlantic marketplace were not mere moral violations, but were rejections of God's impending kingdom.²⁹⁵ Woolman made reference to Isaiah's peaceable kingdom because it substantiated his theogico-social vision for human affairs.²⁹⁶ He believed that that state, where the creation would coexist peacefully and God's direct presence would be known universally, was a far cry from what he saw as he traveled through England. Woolman's claim that people should leave apostate employment in the city was supported on the basis²⁹⁷ that Isaiah's peaceable kingdom made real claims on world affairs. Since Woolman believed that humanity was on the threshold of a new state in God, the rebellion he observed was all the more

²⁹² See Isaiah 11:6-8.

²⁹³ Isaiah 11:9.

²⁹⁴ Isaiah 65:25.

²⁹⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 185.

²⁹⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 185.

²⁹⁷ Toulmin, *Uses of Argument*, 98.

disturbing as it carried eschatological consequences.²⁹⁸ Yet, to some degree, he already experienced Isaiah's peaceable kingdom when he watched the 'innocent birds' and 'sheep in the pastures, who act according to the will of their Creator....'²⁹⁹ Thus, he implied that, while there was much that hindered the full realisation of his theogico-social vision of a creation-centred, agrarian-based redemption, as it was described in Isaiah, it was still present and visible to those who could discern it.³⁰⁰

Moreover, he felt that the rebellion from God's creative intentions, observable in his day, was particularly dire and this intensified his sense of eschatological urgency.³⁰¹ As he observed³⁰² the mail coach system in England, he repudiated the abusive treatment of both horses and post boys on which the system was built: 'So great is the hurry in the spirit of this world that in aiming to do business quick and to gain wealth the creation at this day doth loudly groan!'³⁰³ The Apostle Paul wrote that 'the creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.'³⁰⁴ For Paul, the groans of the creation presaged this-worldly redemption and transformation into a new creation.³⁰⁵ It is uncertain whether Woolman had precisely this meaning in mind when he quoted Paul, but that the 'creation at this day doth loudly groan' does imply some sort of impending climax and resolution to world events.³⁰⁶

²⁹⁸ See also 4.3.

²⁹⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 185.

³⁰⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 185; See also 17th century Quaker leader William Dewsbury's vision of the peaceable kingdom in 5.1.2: Dewsbury, like Woolman after him, understood Isaiah's prophecy to typify what the eschaton would be like. However, Dewsbury couched his vision in a spiritualisation of militaristic language, while Woolman thought the kingdom would progress through 'reformation'.

³⁰¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 183.

³⁰² Woolman was aware of the postal system before he arrived in England and made provisions to receive mail in a way that avoided using it. Woolman, 'Journal', 183–184.

³⁰³ Woolman, 'Journal', 183.

³⁰⁴ Romans 8:22.

³⁰⁵ See Romans 8.

³⁰⁶ N.T. Wright, 'The Letter to the Romans', in *New Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, ed. Leander Keck, vol. 10 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 597.

God's will would be done on earth because God would govern God's kingdom directly and the created order would recognise God's sovereignty and be united with God's will.³⁰⁷ This theologically-social vision would be characterised by right relationships among the creation, in accordance with God's creative intentions.³⁰⁸ Just as Isaiah envisioned a world where predator and prey would live together harmoniously, Woolman believed the realising eschatological society would be one where the former oppressor and the former oppressed would dwell together peacefully in absolute subjection to God's governance:

A great trade to the coast of Africa for slaves! A great trade in that which is brought forth through grievous oppression! A great trade in superfluity of workmanship, formed to please the vanity of people's minds! And great is the danger before us!

How safe are his leadings, who is the Good Shepherd! How desirable the spreading of his kingdom on earth, where truth and equity are always prevalent! Where the lowest and meanest as to outward descent are treated in such sort that the pure witness in their minds is reached.³⁰⁹

This vision was not something that could be enacted by mere human decision alone it required a new nature that was radically different from the prevailing 'worldly' ethic.³¹⁰ However, while Woolman was clear, especially by the early 1770s, that the fulfillment of God's purposes and the enactment of the divine will required God's revelatory intervention and initiative, he believed the complete realisation of the eschaton would

³⁰⁷ See 2.2.

³⁰⁸ Woolman was not alone in his idealisation of farming and nature and he certainly understood that work on the farm could be oppressive when undertaken outside of God's will. However, as Plank identifies, English Quakers redacted, before publication, the parts of Woolman's *Journal* condemning the treatment of animals he witnessed there, which demonstrates a difference of opinion among Quakers in the way animals were regarded. Donald Brooks Kelley, 'Friends and Nature in America: Toward an Eighteenth-Century Quaker Ecology', *Pennsylvania History* 53, no. 4 (1986): 263; William Hedges, 'John Woolman and the Quaker Utopian Vision', in *Utopias: the American Experience*, ed. Otto Kraushaar and Gairdner Moment (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1980), 89; Plank, 'The Flame of Life Was Kindled in All Animal and Sensitive Creatures', 589–590.

³⁰⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 170–171 fn. 42.

³¹⁰ See 4.1.3.

occur through a gradual process of 'reformation'.³¹¹ In other words, whereas the faithful *individual* would be transformed quickly and completely through the apocalypse of the heart, the totality of the apocalypse, which would result in *global* transformation of all social structures at a specific historical point, was only a possibility, albeit an inevitable one. It is to this theology of 'reformation' that I now turn.

4.1.2 The Reformation

Since Woolman focused on this-worldly transformation,³¹² he neither mitigated human agency nor believed the present state of the world was so irreparable and bereft of God's presence that a completely other-worldly redemption was necessary.³¹³ Instead, Woolman believed that his actions in obedience to the divine revelation were part of God's ultimate plan.

In 1770, he stated that he had 'born my part' in God's plan 'that there may come forth a Church pure & Clean like the New Jerusalem, as a Bride Adorned for her husband'.³¹⁴ Woolman believed that through his ministry, and the ministry of others, God would bring forth a perfected Church.³¹⁵ However, here, Woolman implied that he was only one piece in the complete mission. Indeed, in 1772, he noted how previous Christians had done their part to advance salvation-history:

May the faithfulness of the martyrs, when the prospect of death by fire was before them, be remembered. And may the patient, constant sufferings of upright hearted servants of God in later ages, be revived in our minds!

³¹¹ See 4.1.2.

³¹² See, for example, the considerable effort Woolman invested in reforms aimed at improving the conditions of others, in 3.2.

³¹³ See, Robbins and Palmer on premillennial eschatology. Robbins and Palmer, 'Introduction', 9.

³¹⁴ These statements were recorded by John's daughter, Mary, while he was ill. Gummere, *Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, 112.

³¹⁵ Gummere, *Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, 112.

And may we so follow on to know the Lord, that neither the faithful in this age, nor those in ages to come, may ever be brought under sufferings through our sliding back from the work of reformation in the world!³¹⁶

The sacrifices of previous generations of faithful Christians, Woolman contended, created a sense of responsibility and obligation on later generations, lest ground were to be lost by later generations in the 'reformation'.³¹⁷ There is a tone of historical progression in this theology of 'reformation'.³¹⁸ Yet, it is also stated here that the 'reformation', which had been going on for generations, would continue for 'ages to come'.³¹⁹ Woolman implied that the 'reformation' was continual and the universal destination was nowhere in the immediate future.³²⁰ Thus, there is a tension between his idea of a seemingly perpetual 'reformation' in the world³²¹ and his belief that the fulfillment of eschatological purposes 'had already begun'.³²² Since Woolman did not think in terms of an end event for history, time would continue indefinitely, but it would continue in a transformed way. One way to read this, then, is to say that the 'reformation' was the process through which the faithful, who had already experienced transformation, enacted the kingdom in historical events in order that the influence of Christ's government could spread until it was universally accepted. Since the apocalypse of the heart was already experienced by the true Church, even as the apostate were outside of that experience, the 'reformation' was the gradual inclusion of more and more people in the kingdom until God would govern all of society directly and be victorious over apostasy.

³¹⁶ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 483.

³¹⁷ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 483.

³¹⁸ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 483.

³¹⁹ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 483.

³²⁰ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 483.

³²¹ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 483.

³²² See 4.1.1; Woolman, 'Journal', 49.

Likewise, in another case, Woolman considered the 'reformation' to be an event that would bring human affairs into alignment with God's will.³²³ In 1772, he noted the degeneracy among sailors and argued that, if ship owners were to 'dwell in the love of God' and to seek less material gain, sailors would be able to expect better conditions and would not be pushed to such extremes.³²⁴ However, he lamented the fact that both the sailors and the ship owners were alienated from God because of greed: 'Great reformation in the world is wanting! And the necessity of it amongst these who do business in great waters hath at this time been abundantly opened before me.'³²⁵ For Woolman, to 'dwell in the love of God' and act consistently with the divine revelation was the solution to the perceived corruptions of the transatlantic marketplace.³²⁶ The depth of degeneracy in maritime traffic convinced Woolman that the theogico-social transformation would require the extraordinary work of 'reformation',³²⁷ which was impending as the crisis of apostasy loomed. In Woolman's usage here, Woolman viewed the 'reformation' as a whole, rather than as a process.³²⁸ The 'reformation', he implied, would be an *event* that reconciled the world to its divinely ordained purposes.

In both examples cited above, the 'reformation' led the world into alignment with God's intentions, so that the divine revelation would become the criterion that informed faithful action. However, 1) the sense of ongoing historical progression;³²⁹ and, 2) the need for a theogico-social reformation, led to a heightened understanding of human responsibility in salvation-history.³³⁰ The indeterminable and unpredictable timing of

³²³ Woolman, 'Journal', 168.

³²⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 168.

³²⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 168.

³²⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 168.

³²⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 168.

³²⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 168.

³²⁹ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 483.

³³⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 168.

the fulfillment of God's purposes necessitated a trust in divine providence, but the ambiguity of the present moment encouraged the faithful to participate in a future that was presently realising. Therefore, the incompleteness of the 'reformation', in which God's purposes advanced to the culmination of a transformed society, reinforced a sense of 'temporal liminality' and 'intermediacy' among the faithful.³³¹ Likewise, the 'intermediacy' of the 'reformation' enhanced human agency and obligation to the divine mission, as it also increased expectancy of imminent restoration of divine purposes in human affairs. Here, eschatological indeterminacy with regard to the order of final events and the exact proximity to a consummate eschatological resolution heightened the urgency and vigour in Woolman's apocalyptic thought, because God's intervening presence was always fully present and each moment in which apostasy was allowed to exist could be the last.

a) The Spreading Kingdom

Woolman believed human agents were participants in the 'reformation' that was under way and so faithful human actions were part of the kingdom's spread across the globe.³³² Because human agency had a significant role to play in advancing the kingdom, Woolman felt his reforms carried eschatological urgency. For example, he often described a social problem, which he thought violated God's will, and then gave a rationale for his position based on the eschatological consequences of the behaviour. For

³³¹ In 4.1.1 b) 'Habitation' with God, I argue that Woolman believed that he stood on the threshold of a state of residence within the divine 'habitation'. The 'intermediacy' of this vision strengthened and maintained subversive behaviours consistent with the dictates of the governance of Christ. These behaviours testified to the apocalypse of the heart while they served as a harbinger of the complete apocalypse in which the eschatological vision of Revelation 8 would be transplanted into the earthly realm. See also: Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 36.

³³² Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 449-450.

example, Woolman believed that colonists were called to live in a state under the 'unction from the Holy One'.³³³ This revelation being followed, the faithful would live consistently within God's will and, thus, specifically, would only participate in 'merchandise' according to the divine will.³³⁴ Those who faithfully followed the dictates of the divine revelation participated in the universal 'spreading of the peaceable Kingdom of Christ amongst mankind'.³³⁵

However, as Woolman considered the condition of the society around him, he saw his fellow colonists use their agency in ways that diminished the spread of God's kingdom: 'from one age to another the gloom grows thicker and darker'.³³⁶ This was the height of apostasy. The 'reformation' was most tangible and the moment most propitious in his day, Woolman thought, and yet, he saw spiritual 'gloom' increasing.³³⁷ The

³³³ Woolman wrote in full:

Where the treasures of pure love are opened, and we obediently follow Him who is the Light of life, the mind becomes chaste; and a care is felt, that the unction from the Holy One may be our leader in every Undertaking.

In being crucified to the world, broken off from that friendship which is enmity with God, and dead to the Customs and fashions which have not their foundation in the Truth, the way is prepared to lowness in outward living, and to a disentanglement from those Snares which attend the love of money; and where the faithful friends of Christ are so situated that merchandise appears to be their duty, they feel the Necessity of proceeding no further than he owns their proceeding; being convinced that we are not our own, but are bought with a price; [that none of us may live to ourselves, but to him who died for us. II Cor. v. 15]. Thus they are taught, not only to keep to a moderate advance and uprightness in their dealings, but to consider the tendency of their proceeding; to do nothing which they know would operate against the cause of Universal Righteousness; and to *keep continually in view the spreading of the peaceable Kingdom of Christ amongst mankind.*

Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 449. Emphasis is mine. The phrase that is bracketed in Gummere's edition is included in Woolman's manuscript without brackets.

³³⁴ Woolman's belief that business should be conducted only as directly led by God, such that God would reign through the faithfulness of those obedient to the divine revelation, was explored in 3.2, but is a common theme throughout Woolman's apocalyptic theology. Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 449.

³³⁵ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 449-450.

³³⁶ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 237; Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 454.

³³⁷ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 237; Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 454.

upward sweep of history,³³⁸ for Woolman, compounded the apostasy of the unfaithfulness he witnessed in his own day.³³⁹ In a messianic interpretation of Hebrew Scriptures, he contended that the 18th century was the culminating moment of Christ's kingdom, begun with Isaiah and the Psalmist in ages past.³⁴⁰ By placing Christ anachronistically in the world of the Hebrew prophets, he demonstrated that the entire motion of God's interaction with humanity had been to advance the kingdom of Christ in the world, but the rejection of God's 'work' of redemption repudiated the stream of salvation-history.³⁴¹

Behold here how the prophets had an inward sense of the spreading of the kingdom of Christ; and how he was spoken of as one who should "*take the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession.*" Psalm. ii. 8. That "he was given for a Light to the Gentiles; & for *Salvation to the ends of the earth.*" Isaiah xlix.6.³⁴²

The universal scope of Christ's kingdom, Woolman claimed, was recognised before Christ had been fully revealed. The 'Divine work' was a 'work of ages' in that it was

³³⁸ Chamberlain argues that Western Christianity understands history to be moving towards the goal God has for it, though through sometimes unpredictable paths. Nevertheless, the fullness of God's intentions for the world is discerned through God's revelation in time:

Time, in the biblical understanding, is lineal. It proceeds from creation to fulfillment, not in a programmed way, but nevertheless under the direction of God. Biblical man and woman find themselves between memory and hope. Events in time are irrepeatable. There is no return to beginnings. The paradigm for understanding what is happening is not the cycle of nature -- birth, growth, maturity, decay, death, and rebirth -- but the orderly movement of history from an open-ended past toward an open-ended future. Events are not only irrepeatable, they are revelatory. God, to the biblical writers, is known by what He does in the irrepeatable events of history - not that God causes all of the events of history, but that He is at work in whatever happens. His work may be perceived, and thereby His very nature and will may be known. History, or time, is both past and future, and, therefore, memory and hope are the keys to understanding. Israel remembered that in the event of her escape from Egypt God was at work, and so perceived that God is redemptive of His people. Therefore, God's redemptiveness was the hope for future history, the Kingdom of God that would be history's fulfillment.

Chamberlain, 'The Spiritual Impetus to Community', 135.

³³⁹ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 454.

³⁴⁰ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 454.

³⁴¹ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 454.

³⁴² Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 454.

present 'long before Jesus Christ appear'd Visible on earth.'³⁴³ However, not all ages were equal in their relationship to the fulfillment of the universal spread of Christ's kingdom. He argued that God's 'work' was propitious in the present moment, as colonists were a 'people amongst whom this Light hath Eminently broken forth, and who have received many favours from the bountiful hand of our Heavenly Father.'³⁴⁴ However, Woolman believed colonists had disregarded God's 'work' in their own age and had pursued 'wealth and worldly honours' to the point of oppressing 'the Gentiles' and 'tending to stir up wrath and indignation, and to beget an abhorrence in them to the name of Christianity.'³⁴⁵ Rather than participating in the 'Divine work', Woolman proclaimed, the very generation, which had benefited most poignantly from Christ's self-disclosure in a way previously unknown to past ages, had, in fact, mitigated the new reality Christ's presence had brought forth.³⁴⁶

'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind' was distributed widely to Quakers and non-Quakers alike.³⁴⁷ Unlike some of his other writings,³⁴⁸ there are no indications within the text itself that Woolman intended this essay to be addressed exclusively to Quakers. He followed the prescribed submission process and published this essay through the Overseers of the Press³⁴⁹ and advertised it among Quakers,³⁵⁰ but the essay itself was addressed to the condition of a wider colonial audience.

³⁴³ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 454.

³⁴⁴ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 454.

³⁴⁵ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 454.

³⁴⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 454.

³⁴⁷ See 3.2.2.

³⁴⁸ For example, several of his essays mention Quakers as a group, or are addressed to behaviours particular to Quakers: Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 473–487; Woolman, 'Concerning the Ministry', 313–315.

³⁴⁹ 'Philadelphia Yearly Meeting – Meeting for Sufferings' (Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA, 1756–1775), Friends Historical Library.

³⁵⁰ Woolman worked with PYM Clerk, Israel Pemberton, to advertise the essay. John Woolman to Israel Pemberton, January 7, 1771, Pemberton Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; John Woolman to Israel Pemberton, n.d., January, 1771, Pemberton Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Nevertheless, Woolman thought Quaker worship was a particularly helpful means to dwell in God's presence.³⁵¹ Quakers, therefore, had a special responsibility to act consistently with their testimony because the movement of the divine work in history was to liberate the world from 'Oppressive Idolatry' to religious form:³⁵² 'It appears by the History of the Reformation, that through the Faithfulness of the Martyrs, the Understandings of many have been opened, and the Minds of People, from Age to Age, been more and more prepared for a real Spiritual Worship.'³⁵³ While Woolman did not attack religious hierarchy and ritual like early Quakers,³⁵⁴ he believed that the religious liberty won by previous generations was part of God's overall vision for the world:

My Mind is often affected with a Sense of the Condition of those People, who in Different Ages have been meek and patient following Christ through great Affliction: And while I behold the several Steps of Reformation, and that Clearness, to which through Divine Goodness, it hath been brought by our Ancestors; I feel tender Desires that we who sometimes meet in Silence, may never by our Conduct lay Stumbling-blocks in the way of others, and hinder the Progress of the Reformation in the World.³⁵⁵

Woolman looked with both excitement and trepidation at 'the several Steps of Reformation' which had culminated in the 'Clearness' of 'real Spiritual Worship'.³⁵⁶ In the silence of the Quaker form of worship, Woolman detected the worship God had originally intended.³⁵⁷ However, the practice of silent worship itself was not enough to insure God's favour. Rather, Woolman challenged his fellow Quakers to act in ways consistent with the advanced stage in salvation-history they occupied.³⁵⁸ For Woolman

³⁵¹ Woolman, 'On Silent Worship', 509.

³⁵² Woolman, 'On Silent Worship', 509.

³⁵³ Woolman, 'On Silent Worship', 509.

³⁵⁴ See 5.1.

³⁵⁵ Woolman, 'On Silent Worship', 509.

³⁵⁶ Woolman, 'On Silent Worship', 509.

³⁵⁷ Woolman, 'On Silent Worship', 509.

³⁵⁸ Woolman, 'On Silent Worship', 509.

there was always the possibility that humanity could attempt to thwart God's will and those who thought of themselves as the most faithful could 'hinder the Progress of the Reformation in the World.³⁵⁹ Woolman maintained an expansive theogico-social vision that repudiated qualifications, such as the title 'Quaker' and the religious form of silent worship, because the transformed state, which made those features effective, originated in submission to Christ's government, which could not be a matter of religious inheritance.³⁶⁰

The government of Christ was present, he insinuated, but colonists diminished its universal 'spread' by their participation in the systemic corruptions of the slave-economy.³⁶¹ The element of eschatological contingency observed here is relevant to Woolman's theology. The 'work of ages' for the universal 'spread' of the 'kingdom of Christ' could hardly be thwarted. As he wrote in his *Journal*, in 1772, 'a degree of exercise from day to day attends me that the pure peaceable government of Christ may spread and prevail amongst mankind.³⁶² The *telos* of God's purposes could not be turned back, but human action was not inconsequential either. Woolman's theology could not separate the realm of religious belief from the realm of action. In a new state under the reign of God's kingdom, Woolman wrote, the theogico-social vision was already in effect even as colonists seemed to reject it:

A Time, I believe, is coming, wherein this Divine Work will so spread and prevail, that "Nation shall not lift up Sword against Nation, nor learn War any more." Isaiah ii. 4. And as we, through the tender Mercies of God, do feel that this precious Work is begun, I am concerned to encourage my Brethren and Sisters in a Holy Care and Diligence, that each of us may so

³⁵⁹ Woolman, 'On Silent Worship', 509.

³⁶⁰ See also 2.2.1.

³⁶¹ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 454; in 4.3, I argue that Woolman believed divine judgment would be meted out against the colonies if their apostasy continued.

³⁶² Woolman, 'Journal', 174.

live, under the sanctifying Power of Truth, as to be redeemed from all unnecessary Cares; that our Eye being single to him, no Customs, however prevalent, which are contrary to the Wisdom from above, may hinder us from faithfully following his Holy Leadings, in whatsoever he may graciously appoint for us.³⁶³

The consummation of the 'Divine Work', Woolman wrote, was 'coming', but, for those who were 'under' the divine revelation, the effects of 'this precious Work' had already 'begun'.³⁶⁴ Woolman linked particular actions in obedience to God with the 'spread' of God's kingdom which God orchestrated in the world.³⁶⁵ Woolman was unable to differentiate clearly the extent to which the 'spread' of God's kingdom was inevitable, because it was orchestrated by God yet required human obedience. The 'reformation' required both human response and divine initiative. It was inevitable and contingent. It advanced at every moment, but it was hindered unnecessarily, as well. As with previously explored aspects of Woolman's eschatology, the final spread of God's kingdom was always realising, both fully present for those who were under Christ's government, but not yet consummated in the world.³⁶⁶ The spread of the kingdom, Woolman believed, would be worked out in the 18th century world and the characteristics of the kingdom would overcome the 'Customs...contrary to the Wisdom from above.'³⁶⁷

However, the eschatological contingency implicit in Woolman's theology of human agency meant that he was often disappointed by the apostasy he saw around him. In fact, sometimes he thought it was apostasy that was 'spreading' and 'prevailing', not God's kingdom: '[I] was covered with sorrow and heaviness on account of the

³⁶³ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 384–385.

³⁶⁴ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 384–385.

³⁶⁵ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 384–385.

³⁶⁶ See 4.1.1 and 4.1.2.

³⁶⁷ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 385.

spreading, prevailing spirit of this world, introducing customs grievous and oppressive on one hand, and cherishing pride and wantonness on the other.³⁶⁸ However, this moment of pessimism, or realism, was immediately followed by an experience of God's activity conquering sin and led to a theoglico-social challenge to slavery.³⁶⁹

Under this exercise I attended the Quarterly Meeting at Gunpowder, and in bowedness of spirit I had to open with much plainness what I felt respecting Friends living in fullness on the labours of the poor oppressed Negroes. And that promise of the Most High was now revived, "I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see my glory" [Is. 66:18].

Here the sufferings of Christ and his tasting death for every man, and the travels, sufferings, and martyrdoms of the apostles and primitive Christians in labouring for the conversion of the Gentiles, was livingly revived in me...and the power of Truth came over us...³⁷⁰

In this example, Woolman's sense of being positioned between the spreading influence of two opposing forces contributed to his sense of 'temporal liminality' and reinvigorated his conviction of God's intervention in world affairs. This apocalyptic theology enabled him to redouble his reform efforts in the face of sinfulness rather than lose hope, for the disparity between those two forces only reinforced his certainty that God's kingdom must prevail. Indeed, Woolman claimed that the 'reformation', wherein God's eschatological purposes not apostasy would 'spread and prevail',³⁷¹ was well under way. The testimony of martyrs identified in Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*,³⁷² and the rise of 17th century Quakers, like William Dewsbury, was proof positive that God

³⁶⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 150; cf. Woolman, 'Journal', 99, 101.

³⁶⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 150.

³⁷⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 150.

³⁷¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 174.

³⁷² John Foxe's (d. 1587) *Actes and Monuments* – commonly known as Foxe's Book of Martyrs – describes the sufferings of English Protestants under Roman Catholics and was cited here by Woolman. Barnes argues that Foxe 'gave England an explicit and central role in the advance of Christ's kingdom.' Foxe was not 'openly millenarian in outlook, but [he] helped prepare the way for a confident, militant apocalyptic hope, at the heart of which stood England and English Protestantism.' Barnes, 'Images of Hope and Despair', 161. See, also, the discussion of Woolman's spiritual reading in 5.1.2.

was actively guiding the world towards the full realisation of God's purposes on earth and enacting 'the spreading of his Kingdom amongst mankind'.³⁷³ These examples from ages past and the advancement of the kingdom through history heightened the intensity of its presence, or, as Woolman put it, 'how loud is that call'.³⁷⁴ Woolman and the faithful, who 'feel the nature of his peaceable government opened', did the work of God's kingdom and 'labour[ed]' in its spread.³⁷⁵

Now to those, in the present age, who truly know Christ, and feel the nature of his peaceable government opened in their understandings, how loud is that call wherewith we are called to faithfulness; that in following the pure Light of Life, "*we as workers together with him,*" may labour in that great work for which he was offered as a Sacrifice on the Cross, and that his peaceable doctrines may shine through us in their real harmony...³⁷⁶

In partnership with God, those who had experienced Christ's government 'opened in their understandings' could live in a state in which 'his peaceable doctrines may shine through us in their real harmony'.³⁷⁷ That is, while the faithful knew the truth of God's reign in the world through divine revelation, its effects were manifested to all people.³⁷⁸ Woolman here proclaimed more than the benefits of good moral behaviour. Rather, Woolman believed 'real harmony' to be God's intention for the creation, which was fallen, but could be restored.³⁷⁹ The progression of God's kingdom through history prioritised the activity of human agents on behalf of God's purposes in the world and under-girded an apocalypse in which the government of Christ would, at any moment, become the sole governing force in human affairs. Since Woolman did not believe there

³⁷³ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 455.

³⁷⁴ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 455.

³⁷⁵ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 455.

³⁷⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 455. Emphasis is original.

³⁷⁷ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 455.

³⁷⁸ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 455.

³⁷⁹ See 4.1 and Appendix B.

were preconditions to the universal enactment of the eschaton – such as a 1,000 year millennial reign – and Christ's influence was already realising in world events, then the spiritual *parousia*, already experienced by some, could be experienced by all immediately.

Woolman's analysis, in this example from 'Consideration on the True Harmony of Mankind and How it is to be Maintained', that the time had come to reject luxury and act consistently with the revelation of God's spreading kingdom,³⁸⁰ was consistent with the efforts of his itinerant ministry. In a letter to Rachel Wilson, he challenged her to reconsider her material accumulation because it required 'much outward labour to support it' and distracted from the work of ministry she was called to do.³⁸¹ He reasoned that the persecution endured by early Quakers had led to 'the free exercise' of true ministry, such that the present moment was one in which God's providential guidance through history could finally be fulfilled through the faithful.³⁸² 'I feel a tender concern that the work of reformation so prosperously carried on in this land within a few ages past may go forward and spread amongst the nations, and may not go backward through

³⁸⁰ Woolman concluded his recounting of God's movement though history by quoting the Bible in a way that placed the onus of God's activity on the present moment:

When Gehazi had obtained treasures which the prophet under Divine direction had refused, and was returned from the business; the prophet, troubled at his conduct, queried if it was a time thus to prepare for a Specious living. "Is it a time to receive money and garments, men Servants and maid servants? The leprosie therefore of Naaman shall cleave to thee and thy seed forever." II Kings v. 26. And O that we may lay to heart the condition of the present time! and humbly follow His counsel, who alone is able to prepare the way for a true harmonious walking amongst mankind.

Ironically, Woolman used this encounter between Elisha and Gehazi in biblical history to demonstrate that 'the present time' was the moment in which old 'customs' must be laid aside because they were out of step with God's purposes. This typological interpretation, in which 18th century colonial America was a type of double fulfillment of II Kings, typified the way Woolman used history as evidence for eschatological urgency. The 'reformation' was underway, God's kingdom would 'spread and prevail', it was no longer time 'to prepare for a Specious living' because God prepared 'the way for a true harmonious walking amongst mankind.' Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 455–456; Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 483; Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 384–385.

³⁸¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 187–188.

³⁸² Woolman, 'Journal', 187–188.

dust gathering on our garments, who have been called to a work so great and so precious.³⁸³

Woolman consistently linked the 'reformation' of God's purposes in the world to their 'spread amongst the nations'.³⁸⁴ Thus, 'reformation' was not a static, purely inward spiritual awakening irrelevant to the outward practice of one's life. Rather, 'reformation' was the transition from the old time to a new time; the new time, which God intended from the beginning, and had been actively and providentially bringing about. God's 'reformation' was not only for the select few who would hold their secret knowledge in their hearts, but, through participation in God's purposes and obedience to God's revelation, the 'reformation' would 'spread' to encompass all people.³⁸⁵ This 'reformation' was, for Woolman, the universal apocalypse of God's purposes on earth, the coming into being of God's alternative theoglico-social ordering.

4.1.3 'All Things are New and All Things are of God': The New Nature

The faithful, who experienced God's 'reformation' and were under the government of Christ, were in a new state, with a new nature. 'As death comes on our own wills and a new life is formed in us, the heart is purified and prepared to understand clearly.'³⁸⁶ In this new nature, God's presence was revealed in new ways and the eschatological future replaced the fallen state of the past: 'In purity of heart the mind is divinely opened to behold the nature of universal righteousness, or the righteousness of the kingdom of God.'³⁸⁷ Devotion to God's revelation was the prerequisite whereby the

³⁸³ This letter was delivered by Sarah after Woolman had set sail for England, where he died. Thus, there is no evidence a reply was written. Woolman, 'Journal', 188.

³⁸⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 187–188.

³⁸⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 187–188.

³⁸⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 177.

³⁸⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 177.

'kingdom of God' was understood and could be beheld.³⁸⁸ Woolman wrote in his journal that as the 'reformation' spread it transformed individuals and societies so that a new creation replaced the old.³⁸⁹

The 'reformation in our souls' made claims upon – and translated into – the 'full reformation of our lives'.³⁹⁰ In that state, 'all things are new and all things are of God' and the sinful striving for wealth accumulation was 'subjected' to the newly operative power of God's government.³⁹¹ The transformation of the old self into a new creation led to the manifestation of God's eschatological promises through human behaviour and the revelation of God's purposes was 'opened'.³⁹² The behaviour of the faithful in this new state was, Woolman claimed, markedly different from that perpetuated in self-will.³⁹³ The new behaviour that went hand in hand with this new nature was not for the purposes of Quaker tribal purity, neither was it self-congratulatory, but 'for the promoting [of] his peaceable kingdom in the world'.³⁹⁴

As explained elsewhere, the impact of divine revelation on the faithful redeemed

³⁸⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 177.

³⁸⁹ Woolman explained:

The natural mind is active about the things of this life, and in this natural activity business is proposed and a will in us to go forward in it. And as long as this natural will remains unsubjected, so long there remains an obstruction against the clearness of divine light operating in us; but when we love God with all our heart and with all our strength, then in this love we love our neighbours as ourselves, and a tenderness of heart is felt toward all people, even such who as to outward circumstances may be to us as the Jews were to the Samaritans. "Who is my neighbour"? See this question answered by our Saviour [Lk. 10:25-37]. In this love we can say that Jesus is the Lord, and the reformation in our souls, manifested in a full reformation of our lives, wherein all things are new and all things are of God [2 Cor. 5:17-18] – in this the desire of gain is subjected. And employment is honestly followed in the light of Truth, and people become diligent in business, "fervent in spirit serving the Lord" [Rom. 12:11] – here the name is opened. "This is the name by which he shall be called: the Lord our Righteousness" [Jer. 23:6].'

Woolman, 'Journal', 177.

³⁹⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 177.

³⁹¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 177.

³⁹² Woolman, 'Journal', 177.

³⁹³ Woolman, 'Journal', 177.

³⁹⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 177.

human action.³⁹⁵ Woolman's conviction of an eschatological transformation reinforced the contrast between carnal behaviour and behaviour consistent with God's kingdom and impressed upon him the urgency of acting in accordance with God's revelation in the present.³⁹⁶ While the 'Kingdom of Christ' was present, available to all, and would inevitably be fulfilled despite human backsliding, in the present moment, the eschaton was a spreading influence, an invitation held out to the world:³⁹⁷

When the Prophet Isaiah had uttered his Vision, and declared that a time was coming wherein "Swords should be beat into Ploughshares, and Spears into Pruning Hooks, and that Nation should not lift up Sword against Nation, nor learn War any more;" he immediately directs the Minds of the People to the Divine Teacher, in this remarkable Language; "O House of Jacob, come ye and let us Walk in the Light of the Lord." Isaiah ii. 5.

To wait for the Direction of this Light in all temporal as well as spiritual Concerns, appears necessary: for if in any Case we enter lightly into temporal Affairs, without feeling this Spirit of Truth to open our Way therein, and through the Love of this World proceed on, and seek for Gain by that Business or Traffic, which "is not of the Father, but of the World," we fail in our Testimony to the Purity and Peace of his Government...³⁹⁸

Under the auspices of Christ's 'Government', the faithful could act in perfect consistency with God's revelation without compromise.³⁹⁹ Here, Woolman believed, the eschatological vision of Isaiah's peaceable kingdom⁴⁰⁰ would be enacted on earth and the world would be reconciled to God. The result was not just a better world, but a world that was completely remade.⁴⁰¹

In 1760, as the chief author of a PYM Epistle to Rhode Island Yearly Meeting, Woolman wrote:

³⁹⁵ See 4.2.

³⁹⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 394–395.

³⁹⁷ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 394–395.

³⁹⁸ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 394–395.

³⁹⁹ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 394–395.

⁴⁰⁰ 4.2.1.

⁴⁰¹ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 394–395.

In ceasing from the imaginations of our hearts and singly trusting the almighty we feel the treasures of the divine life opened and the powerful effects of his voice who says now, as formerly, behold, I make all things new [Rev. 21:5]. In this new and heavenly life walking in self-denial and resignation we experience our Redeemer to bring us from that state which is polluted and feelingly understand that there is a rest prepared for the people of God.⁴⁰²

Through divine revelation and 'resignation'⁴⁰³ to the divine will the 'powerful effects' of God's influence would redeem 'from that state which is polluted' and be placed in 'this new and heavenly life' on earth.⁴⁰⁴ The very nature of human existence, Woolman argued, took on new significance and new possibilities for the person made new in Christ.⁴⁰⁵ In this state, salvation from sin was known in this life⁴⁰⁶ and humanity was made to participate in the universal eschatological transformation which was already realising on earth.⁴⁰⁷ Since he believed all things were new –whether or not this new reality was recognised by others –the old eon of sin and alienation from God was finished and had given way to the kingdom.⁴⁰⁸ In his short essay 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', Woolman proclaimed that greed and materialism were finished because God had already reordered society in a new way:⁴⁰⁹

In the harmonious Spirit of Society, Christ is all in all.

Here it is that *Old Things are past away, all Things are new, all things are of God* [2 Cor. 5:17-18]; and the Desire for outward Riches is at at [sic] End...

Now this Matter hath deeply affected my Mind. The Lord, through merciful Chastisements, hath given me a Feeling of that Love, in which

⁴⁰² John Woolman, 'The Epistle of 1760 from PYM to Rhode Island Yearly Meeting', in *John Woolman and the Affairs of Truth: The Journalist's Essays, Epistles, and Ephemera*, ed. James Proud (San Francisco, CA: Inner Light Books, 2010), 257.

⁴⁰³ See 2.1.1.

⁴⁰⁴ Woolman, 'Epistle of 1760', 257.

⁴⁰⁵ Woolman, 'Epistle of 1760', 257.

⁴⁰⁶ See, 4.2 for an explanation of how Woolman's perfectionism was both eschatological and salvific.

⁴⁰⁷ Woolman, 'Epistle of 1760', 257.

⁴⁰⁸ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 491–492.

⁴⁰⁹ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 491–492.

the Harmony of Society standeth, and a Sight of the Growth of that Seed which bringeth forth Wars and great Calamities in the World, and a Labour attends me to open it to others.⁴¹⁰

Recreated by God as God's agents, the recipients of divine revelation participated in the full apocalypse of God's purposes on earth. They cast down rebellious practices and embodied a theologically-social vision which enacted the 'Harmony of Society'.⁴¹¹ The newness of the state of being Woolman believed himself to have entered was one in which individuals could perfectly embody God's global and eschatological vision.⁴¹²

While traveling in England, in 1772, Woolman recorded a vision he had received a couple of years earlier, probably during his pleurisy attack, in 1770.⁴¹³ In this near-death experience, Woolman,

saw a mass of matter of a dull gloomy colour, between the south and the east, and was informed that this mass was human beings in as great misery as they could be and live, and that I was mixed in with them and henceforth might not consider myself as a distinct or separate being.⁴¹⁴

He, then, heard the voice of an angel say, '*John Woolman is dead*', but the words were a 'mystery' to him.⁴¹⁵ Like the other vision Woolman recorded as having been received during an attack of pleurisy,⁴¹⁶ this one was mediated by heavenly beings, a common characteristic of apocalyptic thought.⁴¹⁷ Woolman's vision of worldly suffering and oppression coincided with the loss of his identity, '*John Woolman is dead*'.⁴¹⁸ Woolman did not use the word 'resignation' in this passage, as he had in so many others, but the

⁴¹⁰ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 491–492.

⁴¹¹ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 491–492.

⁴¹² Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 491–492; see also, 4.2.

⁴¹³ Woolman, 'Journal', 185–186; for another vision during this pleurisy sickness in which Woolman experienced the divine 'habitation' revealed to him by God, see 4.1.1 b) 'Habitation' with God.

⁴¹⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 185–186.

⁴¹⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 185–186.

⁴¹⁶ See 4.1.1 b).

⁴¹⁷ Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', 6.

⁴¹⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 185–186.

concept of 'resignation' pervades this experience.⁴¹⁹ 'Resignation' was, for Woolman, the epistemic in which divine truths were revealed to him.⁴²⁰ However, according to Woolman, revelation was more than just the passive dissemination of knowledge from God to God's agents, revelation changed the nature of the subject; gave them a renewed state. To use the words Woolman quoted from 2 Corinthians 5:17-18, the 'old things are passed away' and, in the rest of the vision, Woolman experienced the revelation of himself as a 'new creature', enraptured in God's will. The initial 'mystery'⁴²¹ of these events revealed to him a foreknowledge of the condition of people in places he had never personally visited.⁴²² Collins calls these visionary travels an 'otherworldly journey', which is, itself, a form of visual revelation.⁴²³ Here, God's knowledge and purposes break into the physical realm, an apocalyptic event in which Woolman believed he was integrated into the divine will, so that his theogico-social vision became tangible:

I was then carried in spirit to the mines, where poor oppressed people were digging rich treasures for those called Christians, and heard them blaspheme the name of Christ, at which I was grieved, for his name to me was precious. Then I was informed that these heathens were told that those who oppressed them were the followers of Christ, and they said amongst themselves: "If Christ directed them to use us in this sort, then Christ is a cruel tyrant."⁴²⁴

At this stage in Woolman's vision the other-worldly invades the earthly realm, both in terms of his physical experience of illness and in the connotations for universal

⁴¹⁹ See 2.1.1.

⁴²⁰ See 2.1.1. The idea of 'resignation' has precedence in the mystical writers Woolman read. See discussions of Boehme and á Kempis in 5.1.1.

⁴²¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 186.

⁴²² Woolman, 'Journal', 186.

⁴²³ Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', 7.

⁴²⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 186.

transformation embodied by the recipient of the apocalyptic vision, Woolman himself.⁴²⁵

The 'mystery' was then 'opened' as Woolman responded faithfully to divine instructions⁴²⁶ to speak and, out of that response, Woolman experienced personal salvation⁴²⁷ in this world through 'the death of my own will,' which resulted in a this-worldly, spiritual resurrection to a new state in Christ.⁴²⁸

This apocalyptic vision translated into specific, material convictions about specific behaviours consistent with Woolman's theoglico-social vision. The issue brought to the fore in this vision was the oppression of workers in silver mines and, thus, the necessity of abstaining from the use of silver dishes. However, the application is similar to that of other issues – like slavery, transatlantic trading, wearing undyed clothing – which involved oppression and required absolute dependence on God's wisdom for the faithful to navigate their relationship to them while holding out the witness of God's kingdom to the world.

⁴²⁵ Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', 7.

⁴²⁶ Response to divine instruction is a characteristic of apocalyptic experiences; see, Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', 11.

⁴²⁷ Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', 7.

⁴²⁸ Woolman described this new knowledge he gained from this vision as that of a new self:

All this time the song of the angel remained a mystery, and in the morning my dear wife and some others coming to my bedside, I asked them if they knew who I was; and they, telling me I was John Woolman, thought I was only light-headed, for I told them not what the angel said, nor was I disposed to talk much to anyone, but was very desirous to get so deep that I might understand this mystery.

My tongue was often so dry that I could not speak till I had moved it about and gathered some moisture, and as I lay still for a time, at length I felt divine power prepare my mouth that I could speak, and then I said: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me, and the life I now live in the flesh is by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" [Gal. 2:20]. Then the mystery was opened, and I perceived there was joy in heaven over a sinner who had repented and that that language *John Woolman is dead* meant no more than the death of my own will.

Soon after this I coughed and raised much bloody matter, which I had not during this vision, and now my natural understanding returned as before. Here I saw that people getting silver vessels to set off their tables at entertainments was often stained with worldly glory, and that in the present state of things, I should take heed how I fed myself from out of silver vessels.

Woolman, 'Journal', 186.

Woolman's vision contained hallmarks of apocalyptic thought like: 1) this-worldly resurrection ('I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live')⁴²⁹; and, 2) divine admonition to speak ('I felt divine power prepare my mouth that I could speak')⁴³⁰, as well as those characteristics already listed, such as cosmic transformation, personal salvation, angelic mediation, revelation, secret knowledge and an other-worldly journey.⁴³¹ Here the lines between heaven and earth were blurred and Woolman believed himself to be on the threshold between God's eternal purposes and the fallen world, but he did not believe those two realms were so distinct because he could be in both at the same time. He believed he was already in that state in which 'John Woolman is dead', and, therefore, he was literally alive in Christ.⁴³² In that state, he thought he was prepared to speak and act directly as God wished as God's agent on earth.⁴³³

Visions like this one highlight his belief in the realising victory of God's reign in human affairs. The resurrection Woolman experienced and the apocalyptic invasion of God's 'language' into the world⁴³⁴ is best understood within the context of his apocalyptic theology. The supernatural revelation disclosed to human recipients in the present order envisaged a counter ethic, an alternative theologically-social ordering, which would be typical of the world fully under God's leadership, but entirely available in the present. God's perfect will, then, made claims on world affairs. Woolman's position as God's agent, in a state in which 'old things are past away, all things are new, and all things are of God',⁴³⁵ meant that his actions and witness were part of the apocalypse of

⁴²⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 186.

⁴³⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 186.

⁴³¹ Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', 6-11.

⁴³² Woolman, 'Journal', 186.

⁴³³ Woolman, 'Journal', 186.

⁴³⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 186.

⁴³⁵ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 491-492.

God's purposes in the world, not just as an exemplary, moral person, but as a completely new creation, no longer a slave to the 'natural mind'.⁴³⁶

As he wrote, in 1772, 'In this state we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God. Dead to the love of money. Dead to worldly honour, and to that friendship which is at enmity with Him, and thus he is felt to be our Rock and our Safe Habitation'.⁴³⁷ Spiritual death preceded resurrection to a state which was at once in the world and in the eschaton. The death of human will, that is, the false-self, was a necessary step in the spiritual itinerary that led to resurrection in Christ and this-worldly life under the alternative ordering of the government of Christ.⁴³⁸ Inward spiritual convictions and outward behaviours were linked together eschatologically⁴³⁹ because belief in God's inbreaking reign required obedience: 'that in all business by sea or land we may constantly keep in view the coming of his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven'.⁴⁴⁰ In that state in God's purposes, the faithful could experience on earth the 'Safe Habitation',⁴⁴¹ which meant having one foot in the direct presence of God, described in Revelation 8, and one foot in the present order, as God's spokesperson.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 177.

⁴³⁷ Woolman, 'Conversations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 473.

⁴³⁸ See 3.2.1.

⁴³⁹ Indeed, Barth contends that eschatology involves ethics because, in view of the penultimate nature of the present moment, the 'time of *responsibility* for the occurrence of *human righteousness*', for Christian action and for 'effort and struggle' is always present. Busch, *Great Passion*, 287.

⁴⁴⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 174.

⁴⁴¹ Woolman, 'Conversations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 473.

⁴⁴² See also, 4.1.1; Moore notes that early Quakers often distinguished between their 'worldly' name and occupation and their real spiritual name. They believed that the outward semblances of life were only echoes of their true state, known by God. Dandelion called this theology among early Friends a 'spiritualised true self' which was 'about a unity with Christ, beyond the world whilst within it.' This is similar to Woolman's notion of the necessity of the death of human will which resulted in a life 'hid with God', in which eternal and heavenly truths were experienced and enacted on earth. Moore, *Light in Their Consciences*, 127; Dandelion, *Introduction*, 25-26; Woolman, 'Conversations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 473.

4.1.4 Section Summary

This section demonstrates that Woolman's theogico-social vision spoke of a realising, amillennial eschatology.⁴⁴³ The spread of God's governance over society had already begun because God's 'habitation' was with the faithful and their actions embodied God's kingdom.⁴⁴⁴ Christ would rule directly in this world and establish God's reign on earth.⁴⁴⁵ With one foot in the eschatological future and the other in the reality of the 18th century, Woolman believed he stood on the threshold between eons as a harbinger of the universal realisation he already claimed to know inwardly.⁴⁴⁶ One need not wait for the passage of time, or a fuller revelation, Woolman argued, because Christ had come directly to all, if only people would lay aside their own fallen wills and 'resign' themselves to God in absolute devotion.⁴⁴⁷ Woolman did not dwell on a personal life after death, because the peaceable kingdom was readily available to those who responded to God's revelation, rather, he envisaged a collective destiny of final states in God.⁴⁴⁸ With each person's response, a life as a new creation or one under God's judgment became available.⁴⁴⁹ The individual transformed into a new creation was able to live in perfect harmony with God's purposes.⁴⁵⁰ The transformation of social structures went hand in hand with individual transformation as the government of Christ became an earthly reality.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴³ See 4.1.

⁴⁴⁴ See 4.1.1 b).

⁴⁴⁵ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 394–395.

⁴⁴⁶ See 4.1.1.

⁴⁴⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 29, 31-32.

⁴⁴⁸ See 4.1.1 a).

⁴⁴⁹ See 4.1.3.

⁴⁵⁰ See 4.1.3.

⁴⁵¹ See 4.1.3.

4.2 Perfection

This section explores Woolman's perfectionism, which is best understood as part of his eschatology because it represented a spiritual state within the kingdom of God which then enacted the kingdom physically in world events. Individuals could overcome sin in this life and experience transformation into a state of perfection, which was parallel to, and inextricably intertwined with, transformation into an eschatological state in the government of Christ.⁴⁵² It is, then, in the realisation of God's will on earth through both divine initiative and human response that Woolman's perfection is to be identified.⁴⁵³ A state of perfection in God's alternative order could be experienced by the

⁴⁵² Fox, in particular, referred to Christ's government as the controlling aspect in the faithful, but his usage of the phrase was mostly intended to regulate Quaker comportment. Woolman used the term in a universalised way, indicating the eschatological reign of Christ over all aspects of human affairs. See my discussion of early Quaker 'government of Christ' language in 5.1.

⁴⁵³ Flew helpfully illuminates the positive, eschatological function of perfection:

...the idea of perfection is not regarded as synonymous with sinlessness. Freedom from sin must be an element in the ideal. But the idea of perfection should be stated positively rather than negatively; it is far larger and more inclusive than it has been made to appear in the teaching of many "perfectionists" of the nineteenth century. For this reason the primary and determinative description is to be sought in the teaching of our Lord about the Kingdom of God, as recorded in the Synoptic Gospels. Perhaps in the attempt at a synthesis of the various elements in that teaching, and in the treatment of it as containing an ideal realizable in some measure in this world, may be found a new setting for the idea of perfection.

However, Flew did not go far enough in his definition to be fully consistent with Woolman's view, and retreated too quickly from the logical conclusion of the imminence of the kingdom of God:

Of course, the word "perfection" when applied to any attainment in this life is strictly incorrect, and the phrase "relative perfection" contains a contradiction. But we can hardly avoid some such phrase. On the one hand, we must hold fast the truth that the ideal attainable in this life can never be the Christian's ultimate goal; on the other hand, the words "perfect" or "perfection" as applied to a certain degree of attainment in this world are enshrined in the Sermon on the Mount, in the Epistles of St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and have had a long and honourable history in the Catholic tradition...

Flew contends that only a degree of perfection is attainable in this life, not a full realisation. This would be theologically consistent for a theologian who ultimately believed that the eschaton itself would be other-worldly. In contrast, Woolman believed that God's kingdom was immediately and directly available on earth, which brought with it confidence in a state of absolute perfection in this life for those 'resigned' to the revelation of God. R. Newton Flew, *The Idea of Perfection in Christian Theology: An Historical Study of the Christian Ideal for the Present Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), xii-xiii.

faithful, without the necessity of escaping the physical world.⁴⁵⁴

The realising, this-worldly nature of Woolman's eschatology meant that the peaceable kingdom would be established on earth within historical time.⁴⁵⁵ His eschatology involved not just a transition to a better world, but the transformation of this world, in which humanity, acting under the direct governance of Christ in all things and united to Christ, became new creations.⁴⁵⁶ These aspects of Woolman's apocalyptic theology rely heavily upon a doctrine of perfection because the apocalypse of God's purposes into the world required that God's agents were capable of implementing them on earth. In other words, as God's will entered the world of human affairs, humanity itself was transformed to such an extent that God's perfect will was united with human will and societal organisation.

For example, Woolman believed that obedience to God's will and life in God's power could transcend normal human relationships, which advanced some at the expense of others, such as familial relationships, and arrive at a state of perfection founded solely on God's purposes: 'This doctrine [obedience to Christ over worldly attachment] agrees well with a state truly complete, where love necessarily operates according to the agreeableness of things on principles unalterable and in themselves perfect.'⁴⁵⁷ While parents were responsible for their children, to heap luxuries on them at the expense of slaves was short-sighted, spiritually defeating and a violation of his theologicocial vision: 'to love our children is needful; but except this love proceeds from the true heavenly principle which sees beyond earthly treasures, it will rather be

⁴⁵⁴ See 4.1.

⁴⁵⁵ See 4.1.

⁴⁵⁶ See 4.1.3.

⁴⁵⁷ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 199.

injurious than of any real advantage to them. Where the fountain is corrupt, the streams must necessarily be impure.⁴⁵⁸ Thus, he implied, the divine revelation would teach colonists how to live consistently with God's purposes.

Woolman was not worried about any perceived inconsistency between the gradual or instantaneous way perfection came upon a person.⁴⁵⁹ Rather, he was comfortable describing both sides of the dialectic, both purification⁴⁶⁰ and transformation,⁴⁶¹ in a way that seemed contradictory, for each step of purification entailed a transformation and each new transformation opened up further doors for purification.⁴⁶² That Woolman seemed little concerned with the minimum requirements for entrance into heaven, but was focused on the spread of God's kingdom on earth, highlights the active and participatory aspects of salvation provided by his theology of perfection.⁴⁶³ Moreover, his concept of perfectionism was the result of his belief that God worked in and through human agents⁴⁶⁴ for the fulfillment of divine purposes on earth.⁴⁶⁵ The universal apocalypse was related to the apocalypse of the heart in which the divine transformation of society was foreshadowed by the divine transformation of the faithful.⁴⁶⁶ Woolman emphasised both the negative and positive aspects of perfection. That is, he proclaimed both the eradication of sin and union with God on

⁴⁵⁸ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 199.

⁴⁵⁹ See 4.2 Appendix C for Woolman's view on the realising state of perfection, and God's continual maintenance of that state. In contrast, see Olson's interpretation of Wesley's perfectionism, which he maintains always struggled to reconcile the continual process of Christian growth with the event of transformation. Mark Olson, *John Wesley's Theology of Christian Perfection: Developments in Doctrine & Theological System* (Fenwick, MI: Truth in Heart, 2007), 323.

⁴⁶⁰ See Appendix C.

⁴⁶¹ See 4.2.4.

⁴⁶² See 4.2.1 and Appendix C.

⁴⁶³ See 4.2.3.

⁴⁶⁴ See 3.2.

⁴⁶⁵ See 4.1.

⁴⁶⁶ See 4.2.4.

earth. Whether or not these were separate acts of the divine work, Woolman did not say, but as this thesis argues, the prophetic and ethical dimensions of his social reforms originated from his theogico-social vision, so he could not do other than enact the divine revelation in world occurrence.

4.2.1 *Redeemed from the Power of Sin*

This analysis of Woolman's perfectionism begins with his conversion,⁴⁶⁷ which constitutes his initial experience of redemption from the necessity of sinning. In his early 20s, he felt divine love perform a work in him such that he could navigate through the world without being stuck in sin:⁴⁶⁸

And now, as I had experienced the love of God through Jesus Christ to redeem me from many pollutions and to be a succour to me through a sea of conflicts, with which no person was fully acquainted, and as my heart was often enlarged in this heavenly principle, I felt a tender compassion for the youth who remained entangled in snares like those which had entangled me.⁴⁶⁹

The experience, here, was one of liberation from sin, expansion of the influence of 'this heavenly principle'⁴⁷⁰ and increased desire for the liberation of others.⁴⁷¹ Woolman's inward experience of God immediately turned outward. However, his conversion experience, which was efficacious and decisive in his understanding of his own salvation, nevertheless opened up further horizons for growth. After several experiences of direct revelation, he 'felt renewed engagements that in all things I might act on an inward principle of virtue and pursue worldly business no further than as Truth opened

⁴⁶⁷ See 2.2.1.

⁴⁶⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 30.

⁴⁶⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 30.

⁴⁷⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 30.

⁴⁷¹ See also 3.2.2.

my way therein.⁴⁷² Thus, as young as twenty-three, he began to talk about a form of perfection that meant not only freedom from sin, but also its corollary, living and acting in accordance with the direction of divine 'Truth'.⁴⁷³

The importance of this conversion experience cannot be understated. As he undertook his traveling ministry and confronted the apostasy of the world around him, Woolman did so as one who had felt the divine revelation open new truths to him and transform him into a state in which the sinful habits of 'the world' were no longer tenable for his renewed nature.⁴⁷⁴ Moreover, while he described an ongoing process of purification, such that his initial conversion experience cannot be understood to be the climax of his religious life,⁴⁷⁵ he did not merely move beyond his conversion and leave it in his past as one step among many towards his religious goals. Rather, the conversion was always efficacious, even as he acknowledged God's continuing work on him and in the world, as this passage, written in the late 1760s, illustrates:

It is with Reverence that I acknowledge the Mercies of our Heavenly Father, who, in Infinite Love, did visit me in my Youth, and wrought a Belief in me, that through true Obedience a State of inward Purity may be known in this Life; in which we may love Mankind in the same Love with which our Redeemer loveth us, and therein learn Resignation to endure Hardships, for the real Good of others.⁴⁷⁶

As a mature adult, Woolman looked back on his conversion as a transformation to 'a State of inward Purity' which he experienced 'in this Life'.⁴⁷⁷ Out of this 'State', the faithful could love others with God's very same love.⁴⁷⁸ The goal of this perfection was

⁴⁷² Woolman, 'Journal', 32.

⁴⁷³ Woolman, 'Journal', 32.

⁴⁷⁴ See 4.2.4.

⁴⁷⁵ See 2.2.1.

⁴⁷⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 384.

⁴⁷⁷ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 384.

⁴⁷⁸ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 384.

outwardly focused and resulted in manifestations of God's love 'for the real Good of others.'⁴⁷⁹ However, recollections of this sort are difficult to assess as Woolman's own theological journey probably impacted his reflection on his conversion experience. Yet, it seems consistent with his earlier conversion narrative to state that Woolman believed that, at the moment of conversion, a state of this-worldly perfection became the normative expectation for the faithful, and that this new state was embodied in specific acts of love towards the creation.⁴⁸⁰

However, Woolman's theogico-social vision expanded over the course of his life to incorporate issues like sailing, use of dyes and silver, according to his interpretation of divine revelation. In this passage from the late 1760s, he applied a theological conviction from his 'Youth' to social convictions he did not demonstrate until later in life.⁴⁸¹ Thus, he maintained that the new state of perfection, which became efficacious in his early 20s, was the 'principle' that motivated his protest against the transatlantic marketplace as he articulated it in adulthood.⁴⁸² This suggests that Woolman believed that his outward, social concerns arose out of inward convictions of divine revelation, which expanded in scope over time. There is, then, a balance in Woolman's theology between the instantaneous transformation of the self and the expansion of that transformation into new horizons. Perfection was imputed by God and transposed onto the faithful through an obedient life under the divine revelation. In that state, God's actions and purposes were manifested through the hear-and-obey relationship of Christ's direct presence, but, like his eschatology, his perfectionism was

⁴⁷⁹ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 384.

⁴⁸⁰ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 384; Woolman, 'Journal', 30.

⁴⁸¹ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 384.

⁴⁸² Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 384.

also a realising presence, as the fully efficacious redemption present in conversion expanded along with the claims of the divine revelation on the individual's consciousness.

The importance of conversion in Woolman's 'spiritual itinerary' is reinforced in his 1770 pleurisy vision⁴⁸³ and in his 1772 deathbed narrative in York, as he reminisced on the freedom from sin occasioned by his conversion experience, but noted that, after that conversion, he was still a work in progress:

O Lord! It was thy power that enabled me to forsake sin in my youth, and I have felt thy bruises since for disobedience, but as I bowed under them, thou healedst me; and though I have gone through many trials and sore afflictions, thou hast been with me, continuing a father and a friend. I feel thy power now and beg that in the approaching trying moments, thou wilt keep my heart steadfast unto thee.⁴⁸⁴

It is significant that Woolman remembered his conversion. He recognised that, at the moment of conversion as a young man, things were forever different in his life, as he was no longer confined to a life under the power of sin. Yet, he admitted that he had fallen short since that initial, efficacious moment, but was 'healedst' as he 'resigned' himself to God's will.⁴⁸⁵ However, the bulk of his writings focused on the daily, ongoing, guiding presence of God. The 'power' of God to uphold him continually⁴⁸⁶ and to enable him to 'act on an inward principle of virtue', according to the manner in which 'Truth opened my way therein',⁴⁸⁷ was the key-stone of his perfectionism.

⁴⁸³ See 4.1.3 for a detailed discussion of Woolman's 1770 vision, and, see also, 4.2.4 for its emblematic functioning.

⁴⁸⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 304.

⁴⁸⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 304.

⁴⁸⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 304.

⁴⁸⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 32.

4.2.2 'Hid with Christ': Perfect Obedience

After his experience of redemption from sin, Woolman's perfectionism became more focused on the attentiveness to the divine revelation which he thought sustained it.⁴⁸⁸ That is, while the divine 'principle' was 'imparted' by God to each individual so that all people were capable of hearing and responding to the divine revelation perfectly,⁴⁸⁹ people had the capacity to disregard this revelation and 'hinder' the spreading of God's kingdom.⁴⁹⁰ Woolman felt that it was through 'resignation' to the divine will that humanity was able to know and obey the divine 'principle'.⁴⁹¹ He wrote to a friend, in 1757, about the difficulties of escaping pride and sinful 'customs', but advocated that God could enable one to obey perfectly, if one submitted to God: 'but things impossible with men are possible with God, and our wills being made subject to his, all temptations are surmountable.'⁴⁹² In other words, no matter how entrenched 'worldly customs' appeared to be, Woolman thought, divine power was available to liberate for faithfulness.⁴⁹³ However, the ability to escape temptation was contingent on 'our wills being made subject to his'.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁸⁸ Robert Barclay expressed a similar sentiment when he wrote that continual growth in perfection was possible as the individual remained under God's influence: 'yet doth this perfection still admit of a growth; and there remaineth always, in some part, a possibility of sinning, where the mind doth not most diligently and watchfully attend unto the Lord.' However, even earlier than Barclay, Nayler wrote, in 1659, 'that the Motions of Sin did still work from the old ground and root, and that must be removed by the power of Christ working in spirit, and my obedience and watchfulness therein was required, and that without obedience to this faith I could not come to perfect victory over the enmity...' Sin was not removed at the initial conversion to Christ, Nayler said, because backsliding was possible if the faithful did not remain vigilant: 'And in this journey I have seen the slothful servant overtaken with a fault which he had once cast behind him...' Barclay, *Apology*, 205; James Nayler, *What the Possession of the Living Faith Is, and the Fruits Thereof* (London, 1664), 4, 22.

⁴⁸⁹ See 2.1.

⁴⁹⁰ See 4.1.2.

⁴⁹¹ See 2.1.

⁴⁹² Woolman, 'Journal', 56.

⁴⁹³ Woolman, 'Journal', 56.

⁴⁹⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 56.

Thus, while the capacity to discern divine revelation was *imparted* universally, the state of perfection, in which 'all temptations are surmountable', was *imputed* through submission to divine revelation.⁴⁹⁵ Even after conversion, backsliding was possible because people could disrupt and ignore the divine revelation which sustained the perfected state.⁴⁹⁶ 'To be redeemed from all the remains of selfishness, to have a universal regard to our fellow creatures, and love them as our Heavenly Father loves them, we must constantly attend to the influence of his Spirit.'⁴⁹⁷ The imputation of a state of perfection was contingent on continual attachment to divine revelation⁴⁹⁸ in the same way that to dwell in the kingdom of God was a state in the divine revelation which brought God's eschatological purposes to bear on human affairs.

On his ministry travels, Woolman emphasised the ongoing revelation which made perfection possible: 'It was my concern from day to day to say no more nor less than what the spirit of Truth opened in me',⁴⁹⁹ and later, 'I was deeply engaged in inward cries to the Lord for help, that I might stand wholly resigned and move only as he might be pleased to lead me'.⁵⁰⁰ The implicit claims in these examples are that, 1) Woolman believed he could be immediately, and perfectly, directed by God to action on an ongoing basis; 2) the imputed perfection was not only for the purpose of individual holiness, but to be God's spokesperson in the world; and, 3) attention to divine revelation was the responsibility of the faithful, if the state of perfection was to be maintained.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 56.

⁴⁹⁶ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 248.

⁴⁹⁷ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 248.

⁴⁹⁸ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 248.

⁴⁹⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 106.

⁵⁰⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 150.

⁵⁰¹ Woolman sometimes called this constant attention 'walking' to illustrate the path of perfection available to those in Christ:

Woolman believed God would always make it possible to live perfectly, even though this perfection required divine support and attention:⁵⁰² 'Those who are so redeemed from the love of the world as to possess nothing in a selfish spirit, their "life is hid with Christ in God" [Col. 3:3], and these he preserves in resignedness, even in times of commotion.'⁵⁰³ And also: 'As our Understandings are opened by the pure Light, we experience that through an inward approaching to God, the Mind is strengthened in Obedience.'⁵⁰⁴ There was a synergy between the divine act of redemption and the human attention that Woolman believed enabled humanity to navigate through temptations and systemic corruptions, so that they could act perfectly in accordance with God's will. This enabled his theogico-social vision to be enacted on earth as it is in heaven because God reigned through his actions.⁵⁰⁵ For Woolman, this meant outward

"If we walk in the Light, as Christ is in the Light, we shall have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Christ will cleanse us from all Sin."

The Land may be polluted with Innocent Blood, which like the blood of Abel may cry to the Almighty but those who "walk in the Light as he is in the Light," they know the Lamb of God, who taketh away sin.

Walking is a phrase frequently used in Scripture to represent our journey through life, and appears to comprehend the various affairs and transactions properly relating to our being in this world.

Christ being the Light dwells always in the Light, and if our walking be thus, and in every affair and concern we faithfully follow this divine Leader, he preserves from giving just cause for any to quarrel with us. And where this foundation is laid, and mutually kept to by families conversant with each other, the way is open for those comforts in Society which Our Heavenly Father intends as a part of our happiness [sic] in this world, and then we may experience the goodness and pleasantness of dwelling together in Unity.

Sin, Woolman said, was like a contagion that infected the land and condemned all those with whom it came into contact. However, those who were in Christ could 'walk' in the Light of Christ, so that in 'every affair and concern we faithfully follow this divine Leader.' By 'walking' in the revelation of Christ, the faithful could escape the condemnation of sin and live in a way 'which Our Heavenly Father intends.' Not only did Woolman believe it was possible to live in a way that was perfectly within God's will, but, through Christ, the faithful were freed from the systemic corruptions of sin. As a result, he encouraged sailors in a dangerous storm to seek the 'precious effects of divine love operating on our minds, and to encourage them to feel after that which preserved from sin and gives that peace which is superior to the terrors of death.' Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444; Woolman, 'MS T2, Manuscript of John Woolman's Sea Journal'; Woolman, 'Journal', 106. See also 4.1.3.

⁵⁰² Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 254–255.

⁵⁰³ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 254–255.

⁵⁰⁴ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 392.

⁵⁰⁵ See 3.2.

conformation in all aspects, including his attire.⁵⁰⁶ As he confronted 'customs' which occasioned excessive labour and slavery in the world around him,⁵⁰⁷ he was convinced that wearing traditional, dyed garments contributed to these sinful systems because the dyes weakened the clothing 'and wearing more clothes in summer than are useful' added to the burden of material items, which occasioned the slave economy.⁵⁰⁸ Again, Woolman desired to 'walk' in accordance with the divine revelation in order to uphold his ministry and act in obedience to God's will:

And sometimes when the prospect of the work before me has been such that in bowedness of spirit I have been drawn into retired places, and besought the Lord with tears that he would take me wholly under his direction and show me the way in which I ought to walk, it hath revived with strength of conviction that if I would be his faithful servant I must in all things attend to his wisdom and be teachable, and so cease from all customs contrary thereto, however used amongst religious people.⁵⁰⁹

Woolman was not content with a theology that asserted forgiveness of sins as the best humanity could hope for in this world.⁵¹⁰ He felt the inbreaking of the divine will into world affairs transformed the nature of humanity so that the faithful could act 'wholly' in accordance with divine revelation.⁵¹¹ This perfectionism motivated his various social reforms because he believed that, with divine help, humanity could successfully act consistently with God's kingdom in the present moment:⁵¹²

Divine love, which enlarges the heart toward mankind universally, is that alone which can rightly stop every corrupt stream and open those channels of business and commerce where nothing runs that is not pure, and so establish our goings that when in our labour we meditate on the universal

⁵⁰⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 119.

⁵⁰⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 119.

⁵⁰⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 120.

⁵⁰⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 119.

⁵¹⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 119.

⁵¹¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 119.

⁵¹² Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 259–260.

love of God and the harmony of holy angels, this serenity of our minds may never be clouded in remembering that some part of our employment tends to support customs which have their foundation in the self-seeking spirit.⁵¹³

The operation of God's influence, Woolman argued, was the only resource for right action in the world. Under this influence, nothing sinful could take root or blind to God's will.⁵¹⁴ He believed it was 'divine love' which enabled one to live rightly and which emphasised the divine power perfection required.⁵¹⁵

At the same time as asserting the divine act of redemption, which made perfection possible, Woolman maintained human responsibility in exercising this new state. Thus, his perfectionism was part of an apocalyptic theology because it made claims for the proper ordering of world events in which the human recipient of divine revelation played an important part. What he called 'walking' in the example above,⁵¹⁶ he, elsewhere, described as the ability of the faithful to have the 'mind of Christ' in such a way that Christ's perfection was imputed to them and they could act in world affairs as Christ,⁵¹⁷ thus enacting God's purposes:

A person in outward prosperity may have the power of obtaining riches, but the same mind being in him which is in Christ Jesus, he may feel a tenderness of heart towards those of low degree, and instead of setting himself above them, may look upon it as an unmerited favour that his way through life is more easy than the way of many others; may improve every opportunity of leading forth out of those customs which have entangled the family; employ his time in looking into the wants of the poor members, and hold forth such a perfect example of humility, that the pure witness may be reached in many minds, and the way opened for a harmonious walking together.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹³ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 259–260.

⁵¹⁴ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 259–260.

⁵¹⁵ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 259–260.

⁵¹⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444.

⁵¹⁷ Christology was a major theme in Woolman's perfectionism and is described in 4.2.3.

⁵¹⁸ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 447.

The 'mind of Christ', Woolman advocated, translated into particular behaviours of justice and the rejection of commonly accepted behaviours which were antithetical to God's purposes.⁵¹⁹ The 'mind of Christ' entailed a transformation into that state in which Christ's perfections became wed to the faithful person's will and a new way of being in the world ensued. The 'perfect example' of those who had the 'mind of Christ' enabled faithful living and spread God's message 'that the pure witness may be reached in many minds'.⁵²⁰ Human action under the influence of Christ served the purpose of advancing God's work in the world, a commissioning Woolman felt himself called to: 'if haply to point out the more perfect way I have had to admire that Wisdom who appoints to his Servants their several and respective Employments, and to adore that power which hath supported my Soul'.⁵²¹ In Woolman's theology and with God's help, perfection meant action and the translation of God's intentions into human affairs.

4.2.3 *The 'Mind of Christ': Mutual Indwelling*

Christ provided the ultimate example of the way one acted in complete obedience to the Father and provided the means through which divine perfection was imputed to humanity. Woolman's longest and most thematically consistent treatment of Christology comes in his early 1770s reflections on Christ's perfection and how that perfection was attributed to the faithful. Woolman took pains to emphasise Christ's perfection and to explain that it was only through 'infinite love' that Christ adopted 'imperfect natures'.⁵²² Christ was 'perfectly happy in himself', 'perfectly Sincere',⁵²³ and

⁵¹⁹ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 447.

⁵²⁰ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 447.

⁵²¹ John Woolman to John Smith, June 17, 1760, Smith vol. 5, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁵²² Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 447.

⁵²³ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 447.

'perfect in goodness'.⁵²⁴ However, Woolman pointed out, Christ was persecuted for his efforts.⁵²⁵ He shared the 'same human nature', but was able to obey God's will to death, even though 'the human nature struggled to be excused from a cup so bitter'.⁵²⁶ Woolman's perfectionism was formed by Christ's submission to the Father, Christ's perfect obedience and Christ's passion, which Woolman believed would be experienced in the lives of the faithful through the inward *parousia* of Christ's presence.⁵²⁷

For instance, Woolman claimed that the example of Christ's passion was meant to be incarnated spiritually in the world:

Now this mind being in us, which was in Christ Jesus, it removes from our hearts the desire of Superiority, worldly honours or greatness. A deep attention is felt to the Divine Counsellor, and an ardent engagement to promote, as far as we may be enabled, the happiness of mankind universally. This state, where every motion from a Selfish spirit yieldeth to pure love, I may with gratitude to the Father of mercies acknowledge, is often opened before me as a pearl to dig after; attended with a living concern, that amongst the many nations & families on the Earth, those who believe in the Messiah, that "he was manifested to destroy the works of the devil," and thus to "take away the Sins of the world," that the will of our heavenly Father may "be done on earth as it is in heaven." Strong are the desires I often feel, that this holy profession may remain unpolluted and the believers in Christ may so abide in the pure inward feeling of his spirit, that the wisdom from above may shine forth in their living, as a light by which others may be Instrumentally helped on their way, in the true harmonious walking!⁵²⁸

The 'mind' of Christ in his passion was *in* the faithful so as to cleanse them from sinful desires.⁵²⁹ The 'mind of Christ' placed the faithful in a 'state' that aborted 'every motion' derived from a sinful spirit.⁵³⁰ Christ took away the sins of the world so that God's will

⁵²⁴ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 448.

⁵²⁵ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 447.

⁵²⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 447-448.

⁵²⁷ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 448-449.

⁵²⁸ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 448-449.

⁵²⁹ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 448-449.

⁵³⁰ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 448-449.

could be accomplished on earth as it was done in heaven.⁵³¹ Woolman believed that Christ was more than just a moral example. In Christ's obedience, suffering, and crucifixion an actual transmutation of states took place.⁵³² The faithful would 'abide in the pure inward feeling of [Christ's] spirit' so that they made visible the realities of Christ's government.⁵³³ Thus, in the revelation of Christ to the faithful, the apocalypse was experienced and advanced on earth. Here, just as the divine Christ overcame the weaknesses of human nature, a form of this-worldly divinisation took place in those under Christ's leadership, as they took on a measure of the perfected 'mind of Christ'.⁵³⁴ As a result, the recipients of divine revelation overcame sin and in practical embodiments were made harbingers of the age to come and participants in the unfolding reign of Christ in human affairs.⁵³⁵

Christ literally lived in the faithful. This aspect of Woolman's Christology was the foundation for his concept of perfection and his eschatology. In his passion, Christ atoned for human sin, and those who 'resigned' themselves to the revelation of Christ were granted the 'mind of Christ', an inward, spiritual *parousia* which led to sanctification:⁵³⁶

Such was the love of Christ that he gave himself for the Church, that he might so sanctify and cleanse it, that it should be holy and without blemish, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Eph. 5. 25. And where any take the name of Christ upon them and profess to be led by his holy spirit & yet manifestly deviate from the purity of Truth, these acting herein against the gracious design of his *giving himself for us*, do minister cause for the continuation of his afflictions.

Christ suffered afflictions in a body of flesh received from the

⁵³¹ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 448-449.

⁵³² Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 448-449.

⁵³³ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 448-449.

⁵³⁴ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 448-449.

⁵³⁵ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 448-449.

⁵³⁶ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 479-480.

virgin Mary, but the afflictions of Christ are yet unfinished, for they who are baptized into Christ are baptized into his death, and as we humbly abide under the sanctifying Power, and come forth in newness of life, *we feel Christ to live in us*, and he being the same yesterday to-day and forever, and always at unity with himself, his spirit in the hearts of his people leads to an inward exercise for the salvation of mankind. And when, under traveil [*sic*] of spirit, we behold a visited people entangled with that which is not of the Father but of the world, & therein fail of being faithful examples to others; under a sense of these things sorrow & heaviness is often experienced, & thus in some measure is filled up that which remains of the afflictions of Christ.⁵³⁷

When the faithful received the 'mind of Christ', they were incorporated into Christ's mission 'that all the Ends of the Earth might know Salvation in his Name'.⁵³⁸ The imputation of Christ's perfection was not only that which enabled a personal holiness among the faithful, but it also commissioned the faithful to act positively on behalf of God's redemptive work 'for the salvation of mankind'.⁵³⁹ Thus, Christ's indwelling made particular claims on human behaviours and, as the faithful observed places where others had fallen short of Christ's standard, they experienced the suffering Christ experienced⁵⁴⁰ when he viewed the apostasy of those who persecuted him.⁵⁴¹ The 'afflictions of Christ', Woolman asserted, were unfinished because Christ would continue to suffer on behalf of the redemption of the whole world.⁵⁴² However, those who were 'baptized into his death' were transformed into 'newness of life' and became

⁵³⁷ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 479–480. Emphasis is mine.

⁵³⁸ Woolman, 'On the Slave Trade', 500–501.

⁵³⁹ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 479–480.

⁵⁴⁰ This view was not unique to Woolman. Spencer argues that early Quakers believed suffering to be positive, inevitable and redemptive, because it was given meaning through identification with the cross of Christ. The incarnation of Christ in the faithful meant that the cross would also be incarnated through the believer, not a mere historic event, but a co-participation in the cross in which the faithful enacted Christ's obedience to the Father and experienced communion with God's purposes. As early Quakers lived out their theology of Christ's direct presence, they rejected accepted 'customs' of hierarchy and oppression, which led to confrontation with their society and suffering, as they felt, in the manner of Christ. Spencer, 'Holiness: the Quaker Way of Perfection', 158–160.

⁵⁴¹ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 480.

⁵⁴² Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 479–480.

co-participants in Christ's salvific work.⁵⁴³

Those who experienced this indwelling and identified directly with Christ's passion perceived true, if invisible, spiritual realities concerning the events of the day.⁵⁴⁴

Now the faithful friends of Christ, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, and inwardly breathe that His kingdom may come on earth as it is in heaven, he teacheth them to be quick of understanding in his fear, and to be very attentive to the means he may appoint for promoting pure righteousness in the Earth, and as shame is due to those whose works manifestly operate against the gracious design of the sufferings of Christ for us, a care lives on their minds that no wrong customs, however supported, may byass [*sic*] their judgments, but that they may humbly abide under the cross, and be preserved in a Conduct which may not contribute to Strengthen the hands of the wicked in their wickedness, or to remove shame from those to whom it is justly due.

The coming of that day is precious in which we experience the truth of this expression; "The Lord our righteousness"; and feel him to be "made unto us Wisdom & Sanctification."⁵⁴⁵

Being completely faithful, Woolman believed, also meant operating actively in the world in a way that promoted 'righteousness in the Earth'.⁵⁴⁶ The faithful should not excuse the apostate actions of others, but should seek just discipline for offenders so that they too might understand 'the gracious design of the sufferings of Christ for us'.⁵⁴⁷ Woolman believed he was so possessed by Christ that his actions were not of his own will, but were in the will of Christ: 'I felt satisfactory evidence that my proceedings were not in my own will but under the power of the cross of Christ'.⁵⁴⁸ In a state within the passion of Christ, what he elsewhere called 'the true suffering state',⁵⁴⁹ he was enabled to obey the divine will perfectly and acted in partnership with God for the advancement

⁵⁴³ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 479–480.

⁵⁴⁴ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 451.

⁵⁴⁵ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 451.

⁵⁴⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 451.

⁵⁴⁷ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 451.

⁵⁴⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 165.

⁵⁴⁹ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 495.

of God's reign in the world.⁵⁵⁰ Ongoing, mystical identification with Christ was, for Woolman, one means through which supernatural revelation framed the world of human affairs and societal organisation within transcendent and eternal purposes.⁵⁵¹ This was an inward *parousia* of Christ into the lives of the faithful, immediately and directly guiding them towards the transformation of the whole of society and the impending new order already realised spiritually by the faithful.⁵⁵²

Tousley questions the extent to which Quakers of the second-generation identified with Christ in a real way:

Rhetorically, most second-generation Friends would argue that knowledge and righteousness are characteristics of Christ that are shared with humanity, and that this sharing results in an outward conversion. Yet many seem to experience less intimacy with God and focus on perfection without a sense of assurance. This may mean that they fail to recognize sanctification as a gift, and in practice, try to earn justification.⁵⁵³

If this was the case in the second generation, Woolman demonstrates that it was not universally so in the mid-18th century. In Woolman, we see a clear identification with Christ, even a Christ-possession.⁵⁵⁴ Woolman believed that Christ's indwelling redeemed the faithful from sin and inspired to right action. Speaking from his own experience, he admonished others to know that state in Christ in which Christ's will was accomplished.⁵⁵⁵

...prayer acceptable to the Father is only in a mind truly sanctified where the sacred name taken on us is kept holy, and the heart resigned to do his will on earth as it is done in heaven. "If ye abide in me," saith Christ, "& my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will in my name, and it shall

⁵⁵⁰ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 451.

⁵⁵¹ See 1.4.

⁵⁵² See 1.4 and 4.1.3.

⁵⁵³ Tousley, 'Experience of Regeneration', 44.

⁵⁵⁴ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 478.

⁵⁵⁵ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 478.

be done unto you." Now we know not what to pray for as we ought, but as the holy Spirit doth open and direct our minds, and as we faithfully yield to it, our prayers unite with the will of our heavenly Father, who fails not to grant that which his own spirit through his children asketh. Thus preservation from sin is known, and the fruits of righteousness brought forth by such who inwardly unite in prayer.⁵⁵⁶

In this mutual indwelling of Christ in the faithful and the faithful in Christ, God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven.⁵⁵⁷ This is, then, another way that Woolman's perfectionism crossed over into eschatology, because the difference between heaven and earth dissipated in the integration of the faithful into Christ's government.

4.2.4 'Perfect and Compleat [sic] in the Will of God': The Transformed State

This section describes the transformed state Woolman believed to be the culmination of human faithfulness, a state of this-worldly, perfect completion in the victory of God's reign over apostasy.⁵⁵⁸ This state of transformation is the same state described in 4.1.3, in which the faithful were completely integrated into the government of Christ and enfolded in the eschaton on earth, but described here from the perspective of the this-worldly perfection the transformed state brought about.

As this section begins, it is necessary to consider whether the state of perfect completion Woolman described in 1772 was unique to him in the early 1770s, perhaps as a result of his 1770 pleurisy vision,⁵⁵⁹ or whether this language of completion was consistent with earlier stages in his life.⁵⁶⁰ While Woolman never questioned the

⁵⁵⁶ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 478.

⁵⁵⁷ Woolman, 'Epistle to the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of Friends', 477.

⁵⁵⁸ Woolman, 'MS T2, Manuscript of John Woolman's Sea Journal.'

⁵⁵⁹ See 4.1.3.

⁵⁶⁰ Woolman, 'MS T2, Manuscript of John Woolman's Sea Journal.'

efficacy of his conversion experience as a young man, and indeed, remembered it on his death bed,⁵⁶¹ he implied growth was continual.⁵⁶² On one hand, this would seem to be in line with Tousley's contention that Quakers of the second generation lost the connection between the moment of justification and sanctification, and so their confidence in their own salvation was also diminished.⁵⁶³ However, Woolman always viewed the moment of conversion as efficacious and did not doubt his own salvation, even as his vision of God's will expanded.⁵⁶⁴

Yet, Woolman's apocalyptic vision, while he had pleurisy in 1770, in which he was told 'John Woolman is dead', might imply a new state of perfection and intimacy with God, unknown to him before that experience.⁵⁶⁵ If so, Woolman's belief that he had been completely sanctified on earth at the time of the 1770 vision would seem to make Woolman's theology susceptible to a doctrine of 'double justification',⁵⁶⁶ in which his first conversion experience as a young man was not truly efficacious and the intervening fifty years were ambiguous in terms of his salvation. The appropriate interpretation of this passage is complicated, because as a young man, Woolman did not hold up the ideal

⁵⁶¹ See 4.2.1.

⁵⁶² See 4.2 Appendix C.

⁵⁶³ Tousley argues that, second-generation [Quaker] experience is consistent with the theology of early Friends; however, the first generation's understanding of justification was integrated into a broader context of the inward experience of the fulfillment of salvation history. The shift to the language of purification may weaken the link between sanctification and justification, such that some authors strive for perfection without experiencing the assurance of grace. The shift may also lessen the powerful metaphor of rebirth...of the twenty-one second-generation narratives studied, only six authors appear to claim a full victory over sin, and of these, only [one] was raised a Quaker.

Tousley, 'Experience of Regeneration', 37.

⁵⁶⁴ See the way Woolman maintained a sense of assurance and perfection while still believing that a process of purification was ongoing, Appendix C.

⁵⁶⁵ See 4.1.3.

⁵⁶⁶ See Jose Miguez Bonino's criticism of Wesley, Jose Miguez Bonino, 'Wesley's Doctrine of Sanctification From a Liberationist Perspective', in *Sanctification & Liberation: Liberation Theologies in Light of the Wesleyan Tradition*, ed. Theodore Runyon (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1981), 56.

of a future state of complete perfection towards which all true believers must advance. Had he done so, the 1770 pleurisy vision would seem like a fulfillment of what he had been striving for, and likewise, we would expect the intervening period between conversion and fulfillment to be one of anxious striving and uncertainty of salvation, similar to Tousley's analysis of second generation Quakers.⁵⁶⁷ If he did believe he had arrived at a new state in his religious experience in the 1770s, he did not teach others that such an experience would, or should, occur and that conversion was only an initiating, but not culminating, experience. In fact, unlike other Christian thinkers, Woolman did not identify normative stages in one's salvation, an *ordo salutis*, or a prescribed progression in Christian experience.⁵⁶⁸

It is difficult to interpret Woolman's 1770 vision because it could also be read as an emblematic experience confirming what he believed had already occurred. This later reading would make sense of the fact that *after* his 1770 pleurisy vision he maintained that it was at conversion that he was redeemed from sin,⁵⁶⁹ and only referred to the 1770 vision once, when he first recorded it in 1772. Because Woolman did not indicate how pivotal the vision was to him, besides a heightened conviction to abstain from the use of silver vessels,⁵⁷⁰ or how it should be understood in his theological development, it could, legitimately, be read either as a new stage in his development, previously unknown to him, or as representative and emblematic of an already experienced spiritual state. In light of this ambiguity, I view the 1770 pleurisy vision as a

⁵⁶⁷ Tousley, 'Experience of Regeneration', 44.

⁵⁶⁸ In contrast, Wesley did try to define an *ordo salutis* which would lead the believer from the moment of conversion to Christian Perfection. Had Woolman advocated a second and complete sanctification after his conversion experience as the only salvific state, Bonino's criticism of Wesley would also apply to Woolman. But such was not the case. Bonino, 'Wesley's Doctrine of Sanctification', 56.

⁵⁶⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 304.

⁵⁷⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 186.

confirmation of his already achieved religious experience and, thus, continuous with his previously articulated theology. His understanding of 'newness' and perfection in 1772, then, represents a fuller articulation of the faith he believed had been with him since he was a young man. I favour this interpretation because it highlights Woolman's own recollection of redemption on his deathbed, makes greater sense of the whole of Woolman's theology and it does not overemphasise the 1770 pleurisy vision, which he only related once.

In the final analysis, Woolman did not denigrate the faith of his youth, and neither did he view his mature faith as unusual or unexpected. It was, as he thought, the result of dwelling in Christ's government, where every revelation opened up new claims for the faithful life:⁵⁷¹

No man can see God and live. This was uttered by the Almighty to the prophet Moses. And the mind at this day divinely enlightened feels that in losing our life for Christ's sake the understanding is quickened and enlarged in the knowledge of the work of Redemption. The natural mind is active about the things of this life but this activity must cease before we stand perfect and compleat [*sic*] in the will of God. When the mind is wholly turned to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, then we learn to employ our time and our strength rightly and feel it necessary to be diligent in business, fervent in Spirit serving the Lord. Thus is fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophet: This is the name wherewith he shall be called the Lord our Righteousness.⁵⁷²

To know and experience God brought about the death of self. There was a spiritual, this-worldly death and resurrection⁵⁷³ in which new horizons of God's influence and power became known to the faithful.⁵⁷⁴ Here, the mystery of God's purposes was revealed⁵⁷⁵ to

⁵⁷¹ Woolman, 'MS T2, Manuscript of John Woolman's Sea Journal.'

⁵⁷² Woolman, 'MS T2, Manuscript of John Woolman's Sea Journal.'

⁵⁷³ See also 4.1.3.

⁵⁷⁴ Woolman, 'MS T2, Manuscript of John Woolman's Sea Journal.'

⁵⁷⁵ For Collins' analysis of resurrection and secret knowledge in apocalyptic literature, see, Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', 6–7.

those whose 'understanding is quickened and enlarged in the knowledge of the work of Redemption'.⁵⁷⁶ With this knowledge, derived from a resurrection as a new creation in God, the 'natural mind' was laid aside and the faithful could 'stand perfect and compleat [sic] in the will of God'.⁵⁷⁷ At that point, no further progression in the life of faith could be made as the 'natural mind' became 'wholly turned to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness'.⁵⁷⁸ In the resurrected self, Woolman believed, one lived in a state of mutual indwelling with God which provided a new manner of living in the world.⁵⁷⁹ In this state of completion, Woolman believed he knew how to act consistently with God's purposes, 'diligent in business, fervent in Spirit serving the Lord'.⁵⁸⁰ When the claims of the inward apocalypse governed the outward, practical aspects of one's life, God's 'Righteousness' was 'fulfilled'.⁵⁸¹

In a state 'bowed down under a concern for the coming of the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven', Woolman felt himself commissioned to condemn those 'not abiding under the inward teaching of Christ' and willfully caught up in the material entanglements of the transatlantic economy, which hindered intimacy with God.⁵⁸² Rather, the power to act 'continually with integrity of heart' would be embodied through just dealings with others.⁵⁸³ However, any actions that proceeded from pride were destined to fall short of God's intentions.⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁷⁶ Woolman, 'MS T2, Manuscript of John Woolman's Sea Journal.'

⁵⁷⁷ Woolman, 'MS T2, Manuscript of John Woolman's Sea Journal.'

⁵⁷⁸ Woolman, 'MS T2, Manuscript of John Woolman's Sea Journal.'

⁵⁷⁹ Stanley Hauerwas has noted the connection between death and perfection: 'Perfection is the art of dying. To practice that art requires that we learn the art of living as embodied members of Christ's body.' Stanley Hauerwas, *Sanctify Them in the Truth: Holiness Exemplified* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 89.

⁵⁸⁰ John Woolman, 'MS T2, Manuscript of John Woolman's Sea Journal.'

⁵⁸¹ John Woolman, 'MS T2, Manuscript of John Woolman's Sea Journal.'

⁵⁸² John Woolman, 'MS T2, Manuscript of John Woolman's Sea Journal.'

⁵⁸³ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 204.

⁵⁸⁴ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 204.

Woolman was consistent in his belief that humanity could be wed to God's will so that every human action proceeded from God.⁵⁸⁵ What enabled faithfulness, perfection and inclusion in the true Church was 'resignation' to God's will:⁵⁸⁶

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doeth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is [1 Jn. 3:2]." He, our Redeemer, is the perfection of pure love, and when by the operation of his Spirit upon us we are cleansed throughout, and our souls so united to him that we love our fellow creatures as he loveth us, we there see evidently that in this inward conformity to divine goodness stands the true happiness of intelligent creatures.⁵⁸⁷

God's 'perfection of pure love' was imputed to the faithful as they were 'united to him'.⁵⁸⁸ Thus united, the faithful were cleansed from sin and enabled to love the created world with the same 'perfection of pure love' that constituted the divine presence.⁵⁸⁹ Woolman thought of this 'union' and perfection of love in a very literal, all-encompassing way.⁵⁹⁰ Moreover, Woolman argued that, 'when [God] shall appear' the faithful will be made perfect like God, because in the inward operations of 'his Spirit' the faithful can 'see' God and so 'be like him'.⁵⁹¹

This state of perfection, which enabled a total rejection of the corruptions of the slave-economy, was possible because God was all-powerful and had granted that those who were obedient to Christ's 'leadings' would be related to God as friends.⁵⁹² "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." And to be a friend to Christ, is to be

⁵⁸⁵ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 242 fn. 8.

⁵⁸⁶ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 242 fn. 8.

⁵⁸⁷ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 242 fn. 8.

⁵⁸⁸ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 242 fn. 8.

⁵⁸⁹ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 242 fn. 8.

⁵⁹⁰ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 242 fn. 8.

⁵⁹¹ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 441.

⁵⁹² Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 441.

united to him who hath all power in heaven and in Earth.⁵⁹³ God was all powerful and God's 'friends' were 'united to him', so the perfected life of absolute obedience would be experienced by the faithful.⁵⁹⁴ When united to God,⁵⁹⁵ the believer could 'walk in that pure Light in which all their "Works are wrought in God".⁵⁹⁶ Indeed, Woolman believed the transformed faithful carried God's power: 'through those the Lord hath often manifested his Power, in opening the Understandings of others, to the promoting of Righteousness in the Earth.'⁵⁹⁷ Woolman's theogico-social vision held that human beings could participate in the apocalyptic overthrow of corrupt social structures.⁵⁹⁸

In that state in which the human will was perfected and redeemed so as to act in and for God, Christ's revelation was experienced so directly as to lead and initiate every human endeavour:

Christ is given to be a Leader and Commander of the People. Again; the Lord shall guide thee continually, Isaiah lviii. 12. Again: "Lord, thou wilt ordain Peace for us, for thou also hast wrought all our Works in us." Isaiah xxvi. 12. In the Lord have we Righteousness and Strength. Isaiah xlvi. 24.

In this State our Minds are preserved watchful in following the Leadings of his Spirit in all our Proceedings in this World, and a Care is felt for a Reformation in general.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹³ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 441.

⁵⁹⁴ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 441.

⁵⁹⁵ It is evident that the concept of being 'united' to God was an important feature in Woolman's preaching, too. Elihu Robinson's journal entry from 1772, when Woolman was traveling in England, reads:

First day of the week [June 14]. At 10 the meeting for worship of Devonshire House appeared J. Woolman from America, in a lively testimony, observing divine love was yet able to cleanse from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, which must in degree be witnessed before we could experience an union with the divine nature, for God did not unite with any contrary to his nature, Christ with Belial, nor the temple of God with idols, desiring all might endeavour after that purity of heart so necessarily connected with our happiness.

Cadbury, *John Woolman in England*, 71.

⁵⁹⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 384.

⁵⁹⁷ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom'. 384.

⁵⁹⁸ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 384.

⁵⁹⁹ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 494.

Woolman indicated that, in the perfected state, divine revelation would be experienced without deficiency and humanity would follow Christ's governance perfectly, such that God's reign on earth would be enacted.⁶⁰⁰ Thus, the apocalypse of the heart, where God's influence overthrew sin and established God's kingdom, was embodied in Woolman's social reforms. He thought his own actions, as they originated in and from Christ's inward presence, were united to God's purposes and participated in the eschatological unfolding.⁶⁰¹ Here, again, eschatology and perfectionism are intertwined, because the eschatological state of resurrection and direct revelation on earth were simultaneously the embodiment of God's purposes on earth. Woolman believed that, as the government of Christ transformed the faithful, they became a part of God's revelation and agents of God's apocalypse because they were harbingers of God's campaign for a full 'Reformation' in the world.⁶⁰²

4.2.5 Section Summary

In summary, Woolman's perfectionism and his eschatology functioned together. Since the eschaton would occur in this world and could be fully known in the present, the faithful could experience transformation in this life.⁶⁰³ In this transformed state, the false-self was crucified and the new-self in God was a resurrection beyond the effects of sin and the systemic corruptions of the transatlantic marketplace.⁶⁰⁴ Here, the faithful could perfectly hear and perfectly obey God's revelation, thus making it the normative standard for human affairs. Woolman believed that, as he lived in a state united to God,

⁶⁰⁰ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 494.

⁶⁰¹ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 494.

⁶⁰² Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 494.

⁶⁰³ See 4.2.1.

⁶⁰⁴ See 4.2.4.

he was already what the world would inevitably become.⁶⁰⁵ Thus, not only did his apocalyptic theology carry the expectation of God's purposes advancing in the world, but, since the universal apocalypse had already begun through the apocalypse of his own heart, he understood himself to be participating in the unfolding realisation of God's purposes.

4.3 Impending Judgment

Woolman believed the contrast between God's goodness and human sinfulness, God's purity and human selfishness, God's government and human apostasy created an oppositional relationship between God's sovereign transcendence and human finitude.⁶⁰⁶ There was a difference between the world as it was and the world as God intended it to be.⁶⁰⁷ This dualism heightened Woolman's expectation for the divine transformation of all things because, whatever appearances might be, God claimed the world for God's Self. For Woolman, God 'made and governs the deep'⁶⁰⁸ and so is the true 'proprietor', under whom humans are 'tenants'.⁶⁰⁹ God's 'proprietorship' of the created world is essential for understanding Woolman's belief that God in Christ will, ultimately, govern all things: God 'forms things out of nothing' and so, 'having created, doth possess'.⁶¹⁰

In a 1755 Epistle, warning against involvement in the French and Indian War, drafted by Woolman⁶¹¹ and included in his *Journal*, he reminded readers to be humble before God, 'who ruleth in the army of heaven and in the kingdoms of men, before

⁶⁰⁵ See 4.2.3.

⁶⁰⁶ Christian, 'Inwardness and Outward Concerns', 92.

⁶⁰⁷ See 1.4.

⁶⁰⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 107.

⁶⁰⁹ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 240.

⁶¹⁰ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 251.

⁶¹¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 48 fn. 9.

whom the earth is “as the dust of the balance and her inhabitants as grasshoppers” [Is. 40:15, 22].⁶¹² Woolman believed in a God who broke into the historical process directly. God would not sit by passively, Woolman believed, because God's character dictated a specific, alternative organisation of world affairs and anything that violated God's revelation could not stand due to God's justice,⁶¹³ and 'we ought to obey God rather than man'.⁶¹⁴ Since Woolman believed God intervened directly in world events, not merely from time to time, but as a matter of God's necessary character, Woolman's theology of God can be considered one of the foundations of a larger apocalyptic theology.⁶¹⁵

Collins argues that apocalyptic is often characterised by an 'eschatological crisis', which may take the form of judgment upon 'sinners' – who are often oppressors – and 'the world' through natural elements.⁶¹⁶ For Woolman, as this sub-section demonstrates, God's activity and judgment could be seen clearly in the events of the world around him.⁶¹⁷ God, Woolman believed, was just and could not accept the suffering of the creation,⁶¹⁸ neither was God disinterested in the state of human affairs, but actively intervened in world events for the consummation of divine purposes.⁶¹⁹

⁶¹² Woolman, 'Journal', 48.

⁶¹³ Woolman, 'Journal', 48.

⁶¹⁴ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 267.

⁶¹⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 104.

⁶¹⁶ Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', 7.

⁶¹⁷ Woolman was in line with other colonial figures here. A strong sense of providence, either as divine test or as divine judgment, was a common theme among colonists in the 18th century; see, Pestana, *Protestant Empire*, 131–132.

⁶¹⁸ 'My mind is often led to consider the purity of the Divine Being and the justice of his judgments and herein my soul is covered with awfulness.' Woolman, 'Journal', 92.

⁶¹⁹ John Coffey has demonstrated that 'judicial providentialism', in which 'God rewarded or punished nations according to their moral character and actions' was an important part of late 18th century antislavery rhetoric. This section on Woolman's theology of impending judgment expands on Coffey's analysis because Woolman's understanding of the interventions of divine wrath related to a much broader scope of human activities than only antislavery. John Coffey, "‘Tremble, Britania!’: Fear, Providence and the Abolition of the Slave Trade", *English Historical Review* 77, no. 527 (August 2012): 877; See also 3.2.

Woolman did not anticipate a purely future and spiritual judgment, but one that was impending, would carry consequences for this life and would be meted out according to God's mysterious will, and so, could strike some people before others. Woolman believed God's judgment was known in two main ways, each of which reinforced his conviction that God was a moving force behind natural and world events and was dedicated to the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. Firstly, God's judgment took the form of 'chastisements', which were corrective interventions meant to guide the world towards faithfulness and, thus, should be understood as a form of grace.⁶²⁰ Secondly, God's justice could not put up with apostasy and so God would intervene in world events dramatically in order to re-establish God's justice and power. In this form of judgment, God supernaturally and dramatically corrected the world's errant ways after lesser forms of judgment had been ignored.⁶²¹ Both of these forms of judgment illuminate the apocalyptic nature of Woolman's theology because they deal with the establishment of God's direct rule over the world.

4.3.1 'God's Army Sent Among the People': Divine Chastisements

In a chapter entitled 'On Divine Admonitions' in Woolman's essay 'Consideration on the True Harmony of Mankind', he explained how God used natural forces as a 'messenger' in the same way the Hebrew prophets interpreted God's actions in world

⁶²⁰ See 4.3.1; Sacvan Bercovitch argues that the Puritans felt there was a difference between the 'vindictive' judgment God meted out to other nations and peoples and the 'corrective' judgment that God used to teach the Puritans: one was of wrath and the other of grace. The 'corrective' grace of God towards the Puritans, then, reinforced God's special mission with them. Woolman did not believe that God's 'corrective' judgment was only reserved for Quakers, but for the whole world as God's vision was for the incorporation of the whole creation under Christ's governance. However, the 'corrective', gracious judgment Woolman believed God used to reveal God's purposes, would eventually become the more 'vindictive' judgment, if ignored. Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 58.

⁶²¹ See 4.3.2.

events.⁶²² He argued that plagues, storms and droughts were God's tools to instruct colonists in the right use of material things:

Such are the perfections of our heavenly Father, that in all the dispensations of his providence, it is our duty "*in every thing to give thanks*". Though from the first settlement of this part of America, he hath not extended his Judgments to the degree of famine, yet worms at times have come forth beyond numbering, and lay'd waste fields of grain and grass, where they have appeared. Another kind, in great multitudes, working out of sight, in grass grounds, have so eat the roots that the surface being loosened from the soil beneath, might be taken off in great sheets.

These kinds of devouring creatures appearing seldom, and coming in such multitudes, their generation appears different from most other reptiles, and by the Prophet were called, 'God's army sent among the people.' Joel 2:25.

There have been tempests of hail, which have very much destroyed the grain where they extended. Through long drought in summer, grain in some places hath been less than half the usual quantity.

And in the continuance thereof, I have beheld with attention from week to week, how dryness from the top of the Earth, hath extended deeper and deeper, while the corn and plants have languished: and with reverence my mind hath been turned toward HIM, who being perfect in goodness, in wisdom & power, doeth all things right. And after long drought, when the Sky hath grown dark with a Collection of matter, and Clouds like Lakes of water hung over our heads, from whence the thirsty Land hath been soaked; I have, at times, with awfulness, beheld the vehement operation of the Lightning, made sometimes to accompany these blessings, as a messenger from HIM who Created all things, to remind us of our duty in a right use of those benefits, and give striking Admonitions, that we do not misapply those gifts, in which an Almighty power is exerted in bestowing them upon us.⁶²³

God's 'perfection', Woolman believed, explained the righteousness of God's interventions.⁶²⁴ Thus, Woolman looked upon storms, poor crops and pestilence as 'a messenger from HIM who Created all things, to remind us of our duty in a right use of those benefits...that we do not misapply those gifts...'⁶²⁵ The natural world was both

⁶²² Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 456–457.

⁶²³ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 456–457.

⁶²⁴ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 456–457.

⁶²⁵ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 456–457.

subject to God's eternal purposes and an extension of God's revelation established on earth. Richard Bauman notes that Quaker reformers, like Woolman, tended to view natural events as 'divinely caused and having particular referent to other earthly events, circumstances, or situations'.⁶²⁶ This 'apocalyptic reading' of temporal events⁶²⁷ implied the belief that human behaviour influenced God's intervention in human affairs.⁶²⁸ For example, Abner Woolman wrote that God 'often afflicts the children of men that he may bring them near to him'.⁶²⁹ In this case, affliction and suffering were caused by God to evoke spiritual growth in those who had fallen short.⁶³⁰ Suffering and natural disasters were not arbitrarily meted out, they believed.⁶³¹ These reformers felt they could interpret God's will through geopolitical events like wars and natural events like lightning and smallpox.⁶³² Since God was loving, just and 'perfect in goodness',⁶³³ there were beneficial lessons to be learned from troubling events.⁶³⁴ Indeed, divine judgment could be purifying, if colonists responded faithfully, that 'we should be purged from dross and our ear opened to discipline'.⁶³⁵

While Woolman was careful not to judge others, he was keen to voice God's judgment and use his self-identified prophetic mantle⁶³⁶ to challenge and persuade others to reconsider their actions: 'To our great Master we stand or fall; to judge or

⁶²⁶ Bauman, *For the Reputation of Truth*, 53.

⁶²⁷ Bauman, *For the Reputation of Truth*, 53.

⁶²⁸ Bauman, *For the Reputation of Truth*, 54.

⁶²⁹ Abner Woolman, 'The Testament to Abner Woolman's Children', in *John Woolman and the Affairs of Truth: The Journalist's Essays, Epistles, and Ephemera*, ed. James Proud (San Francisco, CA: Inner Light Books, 2010), 282.

⁶³⁰ Woolman, 'Testament to Abner Woolman's Children', 282.

⁶³¹ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 90.

⁶³² Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 90.

⁶³³ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 456–457.

⁶³⁴ See, Boroughs, 'John Woolman: Spirituality and Social Transformation', 318.

⁶³⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 56.

⁶³⁶ See 3.1.

condemn is most suitable to his wisdom and authority. My inclination is to persuade and entreat, and simply give hints of my way of thinking.⁶³⁷ Of course, others interpreted his economic, theological and social confrontations not as God's voice, but as his own 'singular' opinions.⁶³⁸ However, he felt the violations of God's intentions for human organisation he witnessed in the transatlantic economy would inevitably 'incur his heavy displeasure, whose judgments are just and equal, who exalteth and humbleth to the dust as he seeth meet.'⁶³⁹

In his 1759 Epistle warning Quakers against involvement in the Seven Years' War, Woolman and other reformers interpreted the impending conflict as God's rebuke for 'a wrong spirit' which was 'spreading among the inhabitants of our country'.⁶⁴⁰ As a result of this 'wrong spirit', Pennsylvanians were calloused to the voice of God: 'the hearts of many are waxed fat and their ears dull of hearing'.⁶⁴¹ However, through the political events surrounding the Seven Years' War, Woolman, and the Epistle's signatories, unmistakably discerned God's voice calling Quakers to faithfulness: 'the Most High in his visitations to us, instead of calling, he lifteth up his voice and crieth;

⁶³⁷ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 207.

⁶³⁸ Woolman's Philadelphian friend, John Pemberton, wrote in advance of Woolman's arrival in England to prepare some English Friends for his arrival:

[Woolman] is a truly upright man but walks in a straiter [*sic*] path than some other good folks are led, or do travel in. He is a good minister, a sensible man, and though he may appear singular, yet from a close knowledge of him he will be found to be a man of a sweet, clean spirit...

Another fellow PYM minister traveling in Britain wrote that Woolman was not always accepted warmly:

His [Woolman's] conduct generally in meekness, simplicity and acceptance among Friends, though I believe his singularity in white garb gets sometimes into his way with those who do not know him worthy.

Cadbury, *John Woolman in England*, 52, 17-18.

⁶³⁹ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 201; cf. Woolman, 'Considerations on Keeping Negroes', 237.

⁶⁴⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 100.

⁶⁴¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 100.

he crieth to our country and his voice waxeth louder and louder.⁶⁴² The Seven Years' War was a judgment for 'backslidings', but he used this political event, in this case, primarily as a call to faithfulness, as an expression of God's grace:

and oh, that these loud and awakening cries may have a proper effect upon us, that heavier chastisement may not become necessary! For though things as to the outward may for a short time afford a pleasing prospect, yet while a selfish spirit that is not subject to the cross of Christ continueth to spread and prevail, there can be no long continuance in outward peace and tranquility. If we desire an inheritance incorruptible and to be at rest in that state of peace and happiness which ever continues, if we desire in this life to dwell under the favor and protection of that Almighty Being whose habitation is in holiness, whose ways are all equal, and whose anger is now kindled because of our backslidings, let us then awfully regard these beginnings of his sore judgments, and with abasement and humiliation turn to him whom we have offended.⁶⁴³

Woolman argued that Quakers could not expect to live in peace and prosperity, if sin abounded among them, because God would afflict them to put them back on course.⁶⁴⁴ If lesser 'chastisements' were ignored, God would increase their suffering and trouble until God gained their attention and their behaviour was corrected.⁶⁴⁵

Likewise, in 1759, Woolman understood the smallpox epidemic of the mid-18th century⁶⁴⁶ to be God's chastisement, designed to guide colonists to act only according to the divine revelation and not greed or social 'custom':

The more fully our lives are conformable to the will of God, the better it is for us. I have looked at the smallpox as a messenger sent from the Almighty to be an assistant in the cause of virtue, and to incite us to consider whether we employ our time only in such things as are consistent

⁶⁴² Woolman, 'Journal', 100.

⁶⁴³ Woolman, 'Journal', 100-101.

⁶⁴⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 100-101.

⁶⁴⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 100-101.

⁶⁴⁶ Smith notes that 'smallpox was the greatest killer of Philadelphians during the third quarter of the eighteenth century, accounting for most of the annual fluctuations in the death rate before the Revolution as well as for the overall downward trend in mortality after 1760.' Smith, *Lower Sort*, 48.

with perfect wisdom and goodness.⁶⁴⁷

God intervened in human affairs and afflicted people with disease in order to lead them in 'perfect wisdom and goodness'.⁶⁴⁸ God was not passive or apathetic about the course of human affairs, Woolman believed. Woolman felt that God's chastisements were administered for neglecting the divine revelation: 'If the business before me springs not from a clear understanding and a regard to that use of things which Perfect Wisdom approved, to be brought to a sense of it and stopped in my pursuit is a kindness.'⁶⁴⁹ Woolman held that, if people would only act in accordance with the guidance of 'Pure Wisdom', the smallpox epidemic would be mitigated.⁶⁵⁰ He maintained that any affliction, like the smallpox, which served the purpose of correcting 'blemishes', in order 'to have health and soundness restored in our country, we may justly account a kindness from our gracious Father, who appointed that means.'⁶⁵¹ Chastisements, then, were acts of God's grace designed to guide colonists towards a right application of God's will.⁶⁵²

The care of a wise and good man for his only son is inferior to the regard of the great Parent of the universe for his creatures. He hath the command of all the powers and operations in nature and "doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men" [Lam. 3:33]. Chastisement is intended for instruction, and instruction being received by gentle chastisement, greater calamities are prevented.⁶⁵³

⁶⁴⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 102.

⁶⁴⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 102.

⁶⁴⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 103.

⁶⁵⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 105.

⁶⁵¹ Woolman's description of the small pox as God's chastisement was only generally applied. He did not announce that specific cases of the small pox were God's judgments. In regard to his own illness and death from small pox, he seemed to accept his illness easily. Plank contends that Woolman died unusually well, which became a part of his legacy among Quakers. His last utterances and demeanor were models of how a saint was to die. These utterances and his testimony of self-denial were celebrated. Woolman, 'Journal', 104; Plank, 'First Person in Antislavery Literature', 74-75.

⁶⁵² Woolman's theology of judgment was similar to that of the Hebrew prophets. Both believed God desired to influence the present, and both called the nation to repentance. Rather than emphasising a predictive view of revelation, Woolman and the prophets sought to challenge those in their societies who seemed to take God's favour for granted. Hill, *In God's Time*, 33.

⁶⁵³ Woolman, 'Journal', 104.

Woolman believed divine chastisements were elements of God's loving revelation intended to guide people towards their best selves.⁶⁵⁴ He implied that God was the rightful ruler of all aspects of world events and would, thus, intervene to direct them through the use of natural corrections, were the inward spiritual revelation to be ignored.⁶⁵⁵ Divine judgment indicated that apostate, but culturally accepted 'rules approved in civil society and conformable to human policy', would not stand; God would defeat injustice and rebellion to God's will.⁶⁵⁶ With that theology of impending judgment in place, Woolman looked to the events of his day as guideposts and warnings colonists could recognise on the road to greater faithfulness: 'It is a time for us to attend diligently to the intent of every chastisement and consider the most deep and inward design of them.'⁶⁵⁷ However, no matter how loving and graceful divine chastisements were, and no matter how loudly God 'crieth',⁶⁵⁸ Woolman believed that divine chastisements were not something to be ignored lightly. Indeed, he believed the judgments present in his own day must be carefully attended to while God was 'yet calling to us'.⁶⁵⁹ God, Woolman indicated, would not sit idly by for long.⁶⁶⁰ Indeed, while it was possible to resist God's will and ignore God's chastisement, to do so would bring destruction: 'if we persist to contend with him who is omnipotent, our overthrow will be unavoidable.'⁶⁶¹

⁶⁵⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 104.

⁶⁵⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 104.

⁶⁵⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 104.

⁶⁵⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 105.

⁶⁵⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 100.

⁶⁵⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 128.

⁶⁶⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 128.

⁶⁶¹ Woolman, 'Journal' 101.

4.3.2 'Rising up to Judgment': God's War against Unfaithfulness

In Revelation 18, the Apostle John stated that the city of Babylon was living in the judgment it had created through its policies and it was headed for the fulfillment of judgment.⁶⁶² When Woolman cited that passage in his essay 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind,' he implied that the colonial transatlantic marketplace was subject to Babylon's plagues.⁶⁶³ Though Woolman did not often use militaristic language to describe the struggle between God's will and spiritual pride and oppression,⁶⁶⁴ through his interpretation of divine judgment, he identified a cosmic battle between God and sin in all of its spiritual and social manifestations.⁶⁶⁵ Indeed, God's judgments had already begun: 'And here luxury and covetousness, with the numerous oppressions and other evils attending them, appeared very afflicting to me, and I felt in that which is immutable that the seeds of great calamity and desolation are sown and growing fast on this continent.'⁶⁶⁶ The conflict between God's purposes and 'luxury and covetousness' required colonists to make a decision about their loyalties.⁶⁶⁷ For example, the call to 'come out' of Babylon was a warning to place one's self decidedly on the side of God or else receive of Babylon's plagues.⁶⁶⁸ In 1770, Woolman made this entry in his *Journal*:

I have seen in the light of the Lord that the day is approaching when the man that is the most wise in human policies shall be the greatest fool, and the arm that is mighty to support injustice shall be broken to pieces. The enemies of righteousness shall make a terrible rattle and shall mightily torment one another. For he that is omnipotent is rising up to judgment and will plead the cause of the oppressed. And he commanded me to open

⁶⁶² The eschatological aspects of Woolman's exposition of this passage, from his essay 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', are described in 4.1.

⁶⁶³ See 4.1.

⁶⁶⁴ See 5.1 for differences between Woolman and early Quakers.

⁶⁶⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 160.

⁶⁶⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 129.

⁶⁶⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 129.

⁶⁶⁸ See 4.1.

the vision.⁶⁶⁹

Woolman believed that the universally atoning work of Christ carried ominous warnings for the slave economy and spoke to the historical moment: 'These are souls for whom Christ died, and for our conduct toward them we must answer before that Almighty Being who is no respecter of persons.'⁶⁷⁰ God's redemptive purposes were fulfilling themselves, even through calamity.⁶⁷¹ Judgment was imminent, Woolman implied, in his *Journal*, God was already in motion.⁶⁷² Spiritual hypocrisy and its social embodiments, he believed, were at an end.⁶⁷³

In a 1772 essay condemning the slave trade, he used the biblical examples of Israel and Judah before being taken into captivity, the people before the flood who ignored Noah, and the fate of Sodom to illustrate God's judgment.⁶⁷⁴ These biblical examples of judgment provided backing for Woolman's contention that God could not stand the injustice of the slave trade or the callous attitude of those who ignored God's voice:⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁶⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 160; Woolman believed judgment was coming because of the injustice in the transatlantic economy, while early Quaker, Margaret Fell (1614-1702), pointed God's judgment at religious forms. Bruyneel argues that Fell thought there would be judgment on those clergy that persisted in their forms, putting burdens on the spiritually weak. This difference between the early Quaker condemnation of religious forms and Woolman's condemnation of the slave-economy was typical. Fell argued that religious leaders were liars who 'have long stood in their Forms; but never was there any Perfection till now, that the Power of Truth is made manifest which will confound and break to pieces all their Forms.' Sally Bruyneel, *Margaret Fell and the End of Time: The Theology of the Mother of Quakerism* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 116; Margaret Fell, 'To Colonel West, when he was a Member of Parliament, in Oliver's Days, and when George Fox was Prisoner at Carlisle, 1653', in *Hidden in Plain Sight: Quaker Women's Writings, 1650-1700*, ed. Mary Garman et al. (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1996), 41; see also the discussion of early Quaker notions of suffering and vindication in Woolman's reading: 5.1.2 c).

⁶⁷⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 66.

⁶⁷¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 160.

⁶⁷² Woolman, 'Journal', 160.

⁶⁷³ Woolman, 'Journal', 160.

⁶⁷⁴ Woolman, 'On the Slave Trade', 498.

⁶⁷⁵ Woolman, 'On the Slave Trade', 498-499.

Now in a Revolt so deep as this, when much Blood has been shed unrighteously, in carrying on the Slave Trade, and in supporting the Practice of keeping Slaves, which at this Day is unattoned [sic] for, and crieth from the Earth, and from the Seas against the Oppressor- While this Practice is continued, and, under a great Load of Guilt there is more unrighteousness committed, the State of Things is very moving... He who of old heard the Groans of the Children of Israel under the hard Task-masters in Egypt, I trust hath looked down from his Holy Habitation on the Miseries of these deeply oppress'd People.⁶⁷⁶

Without declaring it outright, Woolman implied that the state of things in his day was no different from the state of things in previous periods in history when God's cataclysmic judgment had been warranted.⁶⁷⁷ Moreover, the degeneracy of the 'Revolt' was mounting as was the debt of sin in need of atonement.⁶⁷⁸ Earlier, Woolman argued that by piling up sin, humanity 'hasten[ed] those outward calamities which fall on nations when their iniquities are full.'⁶⁷⁹ Whereas the dehumanisation of some for the prosperity of others seemed to be a way of economic and social advancement to white landowners, Woolman's theologically-social vision was attuned to the 'ill effects' of slavery already unfolding in 18th century America; an unfolding judgment, he announced, that was as yet unperceived by many:⁶⁸⁰

If we do not consider these things aright, but through a stupid indolence conceive views of interest separate from the general good of the great brotherhood, and in pursuance thereof treat our inferiors with rigour, to increase our wealth and gain riches for our children, what then shall we do when God riseth up; and when he visiteth, what shall we answer him?⁶⁸¹

God would visit with judgment, he argued, if humanity rebelled from the divine

⁶⁷⁶ Woolman, 'On the Slave Trade', 499.

⁶⁷⁷ Woolman, 'On the Slave Trade', 498-499.

⁶⁷⁸ Woolman, 'On the Slave Trade', 498-499.

⁶⁷⁹ Woolman, 'Considerations on Keeping Negroes, Part Second', 214.

⁶⁸⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 52.

⁶⁸¹ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 207.

intentions and sought to thwart the advancement of God's kingdom in the world.⁶⁸²

Slavery, oppression and self-serving education were the outward manifestations of a rebellious spirit which rejected God's purposes.⁶⁸³ However, in true apocalyptic form, Woolman believed that, just as God intervened in world events and would inevitably establish the divine will on earth, so judgment would 'visiteth' those who rejected the divine will.⁶⁸⁴

Woolman's primary concern was the 'Revolt' from God's revelation.⁶⁸⁵ When humanity wilfully alienated itself from God's desire to be known intimately and to govern the world, judgment ensued.⁶⁸⁶ Slavery and economic oppression were fruits of this spiritual apostasy and magnified the disobedience.⁶⁸⁷ However, Woolman's focus on the individual's state of obedience to the divine revelation is evident in that even speaking out of turn in worship occasioned dire threats of impending judgment.⁶⁸⁸ The actual act of speaking might seem trivial in itself, Woolman thought, except that the act sprang from a rejection of God's leading.⁶⁸⁹ Woolman did not use any milder language in condemning self-centredness when it came to speaking out of turn in worship, than he did for the self-centredness that led people to gain from the enslaved. An example of this can be found in Woolman's essay, 'Concerning the Ministry'.⁶⁹⁰ The essay, written while in England, in 1772, instructs ministers to be on their guard against preaching in their own strength or to enhance their reputation, they should, rather, listen continually for the

⁶⁸² Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 207.

⁶⁸³ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 207.

⁶⁸⁴ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 207.

⁶⁸⁵ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 207.

⁶⁸⁶ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 207.

⁶⁸⁷ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 207.

⁶⁸⁸ Woolman, 'Concerning the Ministry', 315.

⁶⁸⁹ Woolman, 'Concerning the Ministry', 315.

⁶⁹⁰ See discussion of this essay in 1.5 a).

direct revelations of Christ teaching the minister moment by moment.⁶⁹¹ It was to the voice of Christ, he said, that ministers should listen obediently, not their own agenda.⁶⁹²

The natural man loveth eloquence, and many love to hear eloquent orations: and if there is not a careful attention to the gift men who have once laboured in the pure gospel ministry, growing weary of suffering, and ashamed of appearing weak, may kindle a fire, compass themselves about with sparks, and walk in the light, - not of Christ who is under a suffering, - but of that fire which they, going from the gift, have kindled: And that in hearers, which is gone from the meek suffering state, into the worldly wisdom, may be warmed with this fire, and speak highly of these labours, and thus the false Prophet in many may form likenesses & his coming may be with Signs and Wonders and lying Miracles; and deceivableness of unrighteousness; but the Sorcerers, however powerful - they remain without in Company with the Idolaters and Adulterers. That which is of God gathers to God; and that which is of the world is owned by the world. In this journey a labour hath attended my mind, that the ministers amongst us may be preserved in the meek feeling life of Truth, where we have no desire but to follow Christ and be with him; that when he is under suffering we may suffer with him; and never desire to rise up in dominion, but as he by the virtue of his own Spirit may raise us.⁶⁹³

Not only did Woolman condemn ministers who testified out of pride rather than God's Spirit, but he declared that those ministers were even antagonists in the eschatological battle of Christ against evil.⁶⁹⁴ Woolman believed this eschatological judgment referred to people of his day, not people of some future time.⁶⁹⁵ In his apocalyptic theology, the eschaton was already realising and so were its judgments.⁶⁹⁶ This reading supports my argument concerning Woolman's apocalyptic theologico-social vision. That is, in short, that the government of Christ was not just a metaphor, for Woolman, but a state within the eschaton where Christ's Spirit dictated proper boundaries around every aspect of

⁶⁹¹ Woolman, 'Concerning the Ministry', 314.

⁶⁹² Woolman, 'Concerning the Ministry', 314.

⁶⁹³ Woolman, 'Copy of MS Y.' This copy of MS Y is the only known full version of 'Concerning the Ministry' in existence. Gummere used MS Y when she made her edition of 'Concerning the Ministry' and included portions not in the first printed versions. However, she made a couple of errors which are corrected here; cf. Woolman, 'Concerning the Ministry', 315.

⁶⁹⁴ Woolman, 'Copy of MS Y', 50.

⁶⁹⁵ Woolman, 'Copy of MS Y', 50.

⁶⁹⁶ Woolman, 'Copy of MS Y', 50.

society and the kingdom of Heaven would be established on earth.⁶⁹⁷ This state in Christ's government, for Woolman, transcended religious affiliation, nationality and language.⁶⁹⁸ For this reason, Woolman believed that there were people of other religions who were part of Christ's society and there were professing Quakers who were on the outside of this society of the faithful because they acted out of their own will and not as united to God's will.⁶⁹⁹ The crucial factor was not credal affiliation, but one's standing in the government of Christ, determined by manifesting the kingdom of God and being in a state of union with the revelation of the Spirit.⁷⁰⁰

In 'Concerning the Ministry,' Woolman declared that some Quaker ministers of his day were in the state of apostasy foretold in the book of Revelation and 2 Thessalonians and would experience eschatological judgments.⁷⁰¹ To reject God's revelation would lead to the spiritual judgment of eternal separation from God.⁷⁰² The path to faithfulness was to act only 'as [Christ] by the virtue of his own Spirit may raise us.'⁷⁰³ As he wrote in 1768, God would vindicate the faithful and destroy all 'foundations' opposed to God's will, because:⁷⁰⁴

[God's] eye penetrates through every covering, and his heart-searching power is trying and will try every foundation, and bring to desolation every false building, until the alone sure rock of ages, the foundation and safety of the righteous, be established and exalted above all, to the enlargement of his spiritual kingdom, and the completion of his gracious purpose, that his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the rivers to the ends of the earth.⁷⁰⁵

⁶⁹⁷ See 4.1.

⁶⁹⁸ See 2.2.

⁶⁹⁹ See 2.2.

⁷⁰⁰ See 2.2.

⁷⁰¹ Woolman, 'Copy of MS Y', 50.

⁷⁰² Woolman, 'Copy of MS Y', 50.

⁷⁰³ Woolman, 'Copy of MS Y', 50.

⁷⁰⁴ Woolman, 'Epistle of 1768 from PYM to London Yearly Meeting', 267.

⁷⁰⁵ Woolman, 'Epistle of 1768 from PYM to London Yearly Meeting', 267.

Woolman believed there was no possibility of hiding one's motivations from God, nor was there any hope that God's kingdom would not be established across the globe.⁷⁰⁶ Rather, God would judge and defeat all spirits opposed to the divine will and the apocalypse on earth would be fulfilled.⁷⁰⁷

4.3.3 Section Summary

Woolman believed that God framed world affairs with transcendent purposes. God revealed God's self to those who were 'resigned' in obedience to hear and obey God's voice.⁷⁰⁸ This form of revelation was often an inward, mystical encounter that directed the individual in living according to the righteous theogico-social vision which embodied God's reign on earth.⁷⁰⁹ However, through divine judgment, in the form of chastisements and retribution, God would make God's self known no matter how stiff the resistance. Woolman's apocalyptic theology understood this world, its natural forces and geopolitical events to be, ultimately, controlled by a God who was determined to govern the world directly. As such, God did battle with the apostate who rejected God's will. Woolman believed divine judgment was initially gracious in its intentions to guide towards true happiness in this life. However, God would, ultimately, destroy all forces opposed to the divine will and so even these gracious judgments must be taken seriously. Indeed, for Woolman the historical events of his day illustrated that God's judgment was already at hand.

⁷⁰⁶ Woolman, 'Epistle of 1768 from PYM to London Yearly Meeting', 267.

⁷⁰⁷ Woolman, 'Epistle of 1768 from PYM to London Yearly Meeting', 267.

⁷⁰⁸ See 2.1.

⁷⁰⁹ See 2.2.

Thus, Woolman's theology of impending judgment emphasised the notion that God did not act arbitrarily, but in consistency with God's just character. Likewise, human beings were not pawns with little control over their eternal states. Rather, God revealed God's will and human agents could live in consistency with that will, or reject it at their own peril. Therefore, Woolman called colonists to an alternative societal ordering as new creations in Christ's government. Woolman's theology of impending judgment was apocalyptic because of its foundational theology in God's interventions in history,⁷¹⁰ and his conviction that God would ultimately overthrow all forces contrary to the divine rule, so that God alone would be established as direct ruler on earth.⁷¹¹

4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored Woolman's eschatology through the three theological categories of amillennialism, perfectionism and his sense of impending judgment. I have demonstrated that Woolman believed God would act imminently in human affairs to establish God's purposes on earth. Through God's revelation to the faithful, God's purposes would be enacted in historical events as the faithful participated in the 'spread' of God's kingdom throughout the world.⁷¹² This was a theogico-social vision in which the actions of human agents could not be separated from the divine purposes that governed world affairs.⁷¹³

Woolman believed that economic greed, desire for luxury, pride and oppression were all inter-related aspects of a fallen nature, in which God's intentions for the created

⁷¹⁰ Woolman, 'Epistle of 1768 from PYM to London Yearly Meeting', 267.

⁷¹¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 160.

⁷¹² See 4.1.2.

⁷¹³ Woolman, Altman notes, was a visionary, but a visionary who sought to bring his vision into human affairs. Altman, 'John Woolman's Reading of the Mystics', 115.

order had been rejected.⁷¹⁴ Outside of God's will, humanity was opposed to God's intentions, and, thus, in an apostate state alienated from God's 'Pure Wisdom'. However, under the revelation of Christ 'my mind was now opened'⁷¹⁵ and Woolman felt himself transformed into a redeemed state in God.⁷¹⁶ Woolman believed this state to be a perfected state in the unfolding eschaton being established 'on earth as it is done in heaven.'⁷¹⁷ In this state, Woolman believed, he could obey God's revelation and enact God's purposes 'that the pure witness is reached' on earth.⁷¹⁸ Woolman's reforms, then, were not primarily motivated by an intention to enforce behavioural conformity,⁷¹⁹ but to dwell in God's will, to the extent that society itself was recreated and heaven had broken into earth. Thus, Woolman contended that Christ would govern society directly, without mediation and society itself would be recreated according to Isaiah's peaceable kingdom,⁷²⁰ so that the poor were not oppressed, animals were treated well and all people were able to work moderately.⁷²¹

God, Woolman believed, would act through the faithful 'to the Advancement of his Work on Earth', if humanity would harken to God's voice.⁷²² The faithful, he believed, experienced 'the Power of his Cross, to crucify all that is selfish in them'⁷²³ and

⁷¹⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 165.

⁷¹⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 164.

⁷¹⁶ Woolman, 'Serious Considerations on Trade', 401.

⁷¹⁷ Woolman, 'Serious Considerations on Trade', 401.

⁷¹⁸ Woolman, 'Serious Considerations on Trade', 401.

⁷¹⁹ Marietta argues that 18th century colonial Quakers 'had no profound sense of their spiritual deficiencies or conviction of their sinfulness. They had not really despaired for their souls' sake.' Rather, he contends many apathetic Quakers substituted merely listening to the reproaches of their ministers, while continuing in their sin, for the transformation of the self that redeemed and atoned from sin. This was the attitude, I argue, that Woolman's apocalyptic theology challenged and supplanted with the transformation of society through the extension of Christ's government on earth. Jack D. Marietta, 'Attitudes of 18th-C American Friends toward Sin and Evil', *Quaker Religious Thought* 22, no. 4 (1987): 20.

⁷²⁰ See 4.1.1.

⁷²¹ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 241.

⁷²² Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 386.

⁷²³ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 385.

experienced a resurrection into God's will, so that they were united with God and made harbingers of God's apocalypse, at first in the heart and then throughout the world.⁷²⁴ The spiritual transformation broke into the material world of action as God's kingdom took on physical form through the 'operation of the Spirit of Christ' in the faithful, who 'become heirs with him in the kingdom of his Father'.⁷²⁵ For those redeemed in Christ, to participate in slavery or harbour a spirit of pride at the expense of others was a 'contradiction to reason'.⁷²⁶

This theologicocial vision anticipated the spread of God's will and the gradual harmony of spirit and action in a this-worldly eschaton.⁷²⁷ Under Christ's governance the actions of the faithful took on eschatological meaning because human actions were made consistent with the realising presence of the eschaton. In the direct presence of Christ, the faithful could know a 'habitation',⁷²⁸ which participated in the spread of God's kingdom through their example:

In the pure gospel spirit we walk by faith and not by sight. In the Obedience of Faith we die to the Narrowness of Self-love; and our Life being hid with Christ in God, our Hearts are enlarg'd toward Mankind universally, but in departing from the true Light of Life many, in striving to get Treasures have stumbled upon the dark Mountains.

Now this Purity of Life which proceeds from Faithfulness in following the Spirit of Truth, that State where our Minds are devoted to serve God, and all our Wants are bounded by his Wisdom, this Habitation has often been open'd before me as a place of Retirement for the Children of the Light, where we may stand separated from that which disordereth

⁷²⁴ Woolman queried:

Are we they whose minds are opened, influenced, and governed by the spirit of Christ and thereby made sons of God? Is it not a fair conclusion that we, like our Heavenly Father, ought in our degree to be active in the same great cause – of the eternal happiness of at least our whole families, and more, if thereto capacitated?

Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 208.

⁷²⁵ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 208.

⁷²⁶ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 208.

⁷²⁷ See 4.1.2; cf. Woolman, 'Conversations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 471.

⁷²⁸ See 4.1.1.

and confuseth the Affairs of Society, and where we may have a Testimony of our Innocence in the Hearts of those who behold us.⁷²⁹

In that 'Habitation' with God, Woolman felt the true Church would know God's revelation and would embody it before the world.⁷³⁰ These faithful people who were united to God's revelation and were, thus, enlightened with the means for redemptive action, then, had crossed into the eschatological horizon and were active agents of God's universal apocalypse.⁷³¹ Thus, Woolman believed that, in 'following the Spirit of Truth', the faithful could reject the excesses of the transatlantic marketplace and the slave economy, which 'disordereth and confuseth the Affairs of Society', because their 'wants' would be so transformed as to be 'bounded by his Wisdom'.⁷³²

The four elements of Woolman's eschatology identified in this chapter are woven together throughout his writings so as to be indistinguishable. As this chapter contends, these elements supported Woolman's view of the world around him and his notions of God's activity and faithful human response. God, he believed, was dedicated to restoring the creation according to God's purposes.⁷³³ The faithful adopted a new nature capable of seeing the world as it really was, though still unknown to others.⁷³⁴ The recipients of divine revelation, were perfected so as to hear and obey exactly what God intended for the world, and sustained in a new relationship of mutual indwelling with God that brought God's kingdom to bear on earth.⁷³⁵ And finally, God acted in world occurrence to direct the world towards God's will and to destroy apostasy.⁷³⁶

⁷²⁹ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 495–496.

⁷³⁰ Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 495–496.

⁷³¹ See 4.1.1.

⁷³² Woolman, 'On Loving our Neighbours as Ourselves', 495–496.

⁷³³ See 4.1 and Appendix B.

⁷³⁴ See 4.1.

⁷³⁵ See 4.2.

⁷³⁶ See 4.3.

This chapter has demonstrated that in the historical events of the mid-18th century – such as, the Seven Years' War, the smallpox epidemic and the machinations of the transatlantic marketplace – Woolman identified temporal events onto which he could transpose a sense of eschatological crisis. However, he felt that God had revealed to him the pathway of transformation through these events. His concern was not just his own personal purity, but the collective destinies of Quakers, colonists in general and the true Church. Woolman's social reforms were motivated by his apocalyptic theology which held that God was in control of world events and that history itself was moving towards a new future under God's governance. Thus, Woolman's actions and social challenges, he thought, were the kingdom's work on earth. Rather than a sharp break in history, which placed all the onus for change on God alone, Woolman demonstrated Ladd's 'prophetic-apocalyptic' in which this world was a chief theatre for apocalyptic events.⁷³⁷ God governed secretly already, he believed, but would soon govern the world directly, as the inward *parousia* of Christ spread and was manifested through the actions of the faithful.

⁷³⁷ See 1.4 and 4.1.

CHAPTER FIVE

INFLUENCES AND COMPARISONS

In chapters two to four, this thesis demonstrated Woolman's apocalyptic theology. This chapter 1) assesses the potential influences on him,¹ 2) compares him to prominent 18th century Quakers to explore how typical he was of his peers, and 3) analyses him as a systematic theologian.

In section 5.1, this thesis describes influences on Woolman from the early Quaker and spiritual writings he quoted from, or that are listed in his list of books lent. The titles chosen demonstrate particular points of correspondence in Woolman's theology. However, scholars have identified difficulties in assessing the extent to which a person's books can be seen as a definitive influence on ideas.² The evidence for

¹ Potential influences on Woolman's theology are ascertained by an examination of the books he was known to be familiar with. In a ledger for the years 1752-1767 – which was discovered, by chance, at a public auction in 1922 – Woolman maintained a list of books on loan to others. He also cited some books, not mentioned in his list of books lent, in his writings. It is likely that Woolman read other books not mentioned in either place, and we cannot be sure he read those books he lent out, but the focus here is on those books that it is certain Woolman had access to.

In some places, Woolman only mentioned an author's name, or a shortened book title, in his list of books lent. Thus, in some cases, it is impossible to know what book Woolman was referring to. However, the first scholar to analyse the list of books lent out, Frederick Tolles, made reasonable suggestions, in cases of ambiguity, of titles and editions, based on provenance, publication history, and popularity. Walter Altman used Tolles' designations as the basis for an article, and a Ph.D. dissertation, that explored the spiritual and literary elements Woolman found in his reading, and that might have influenced him. This chapter follows the book and author identifications used by Tolles and Altman. Woolman, 'Ledger B'; Altman, 'John Woolman's Reading,' 71; Gummere, ed., *Journal and Essays of John Woolman*, 631–632; Altman, 'John Woolman's Reading of the Mystics,' 103–115. See: Frederick Tolles, 'John Woolman's List of "Books Lent",' *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association* 31, no. 2 (Autumn 1942): 72–83. See also: 1.5 c).

² Robert Darnton argues that 18th century readers attributed meaning to books beyond what an author intended, and how readers often incorporated motifs from a variety of sources in a way that made sense to them, but that complicates efforts to derive a linear causality of influence from a source to a reader. See: Robert Darnton, 'A History of Reading,' in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke, 2nd ed. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 157-186; Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 5, 18, 21, 64.

Woolman's book ownership, though, can be a useful interpretive tool to explore possible influences and for understanding his theology. In section 5.2, this thesis compares Woolman's theology to leading Quaker reformers of his generation: John Churchman, Daniel Stanton, Anthony Benezet, and Samuel Fothergill. In section 5.3, this thesis analyses the extent to which Woolman could be considered a systematic theological thinker and contends that Woolman constructed an apocalyptic theology that synthesized his spiritual tradition, his concerns and his sense of the implications of his faith.

5.1 Main Influences

This section considers the main influences on Woolman in terms of 1) a theology of inward revelation; and, 2) a spiritualised eschatology. This second point is further explored in terms of a) the language of Christ's government, b) Babylon as a typology for apostasy, and, c) suffering and expectations for vindication. This section is summarised in 5.1.3.

5.1.1 *Inward Revelation*

Woolman found in his reading strong support for his notion that the faithful would be transformed into Christ-likeness through the inward surrender of the soul to the teachings of immediate, divine revelation.³ For Woolman, attentiveness to the

³ Walter Altman contended that Woolman's reading had a formative influence on him and that the most important element of his reading were mystical books, and that this supports the conclusion that Woolman was a mystic, even if, Altman qualified, this designation is not an exclusive one. However, problems arise concerning Altman's analysis because he followed Rufus Jones' now discredited interpretation of Quakerism as, primarily, a mystical movement. Altman said that early Quakers were 'inherently mystical,' and organized around the concept of the 'Inner Light.' However, the 'Inner Light,' when applied to 17th and 18th century Friends is anachronistic, as Dandelion points out. The phrase became popular through the writings of Jones in the early 20th century as a part of Liberal Quakerism.

inward movements of the Spirit was redemptive, over other forms of religious knowledge, because it was through the inward revelation in the lives of the faithful that the kingdom of God was realising on earth.⁴ Woolman's books were full of examples of authors who claimed to 'listen' to the inward voice of God to guide and direct one's life, a theme that was apparent in Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*.⁵ Woolman was not unique in the attention he paid to religious writing generally,⁶ or à Kempis specifically,⁷

The term 'Inner Light' represents a change from the earlier, dualist meaning 'Inward Light,' to a monist one that reoriented the nature of God's interaction with humanity. Altman's interpretation of Quaker history as primarily a mystical tradition, caused him to diminish in importance the early Quaker writings Woolman owned and utilized in his writings. For example, Altman identified categories of types of books within Woolman's list of books he lent out (Practical Works, Education, History, Polemic, Quaker Classics, Quaker Spiritual Biographies, 'First Publishers of Truth,' Works of Pure Edification) that would appear to make Woolman's mystical reading by far the largest category, containing twelve titles. However, when examining the contents of the smaller categories it is apparent that Woolman's reading of Quaker authors was diverse, and amounts to almost as many titles, ten, as Woolman's mystical/devotional reading. From this perspective, Woolman's titles of books by Quaker authors can be seen as a significant category within his library, but not given appropriate attention by Altman. Of the books Altman identified that Woolman quoted in his writings, some of which were in his list of books lent, seven were Quaker authored works, and seven were written by non-Quakers. Of the seven works cited from non-Quakers, six were travel writings, or slave accounts, that Woolman used in his antislavery tracts. Only one book actually quoted by Woolman would be considered a mystical work: Thomas à Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*. However, Altman missed one Quaker-authored tract (Anthony Benezet's 1766, *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies*) and one non-Quaker book (John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, also known as, *The Book of Martyrs*) quoted by Woolman, so the total of quoted works should be eight each of Quaker-authored and non-Quaker authored titles. In all, Woolman quoted directly from other sources only 22 times in the 400 pages of his printed material. Altman, 'John Woolman's Reading,' 2, 74-102, 102-110, 233, 252-253; 127 fn. 2; Dandelion, *Introduction to Quakerism*, 132-133. See also 1.1.1 and 2.1.1.

⁴ See 4.1.1.

⁵ Thomas à Kempis, *The Christian Pattern, or the Imitation of Jesus Christ, Being an Abridgement of the Works of Thomas à Kempis. By a Female Hand* (Germantown, PA: Christopher Sowr [Sower], 1749).

⁶ In general, 18th century PYM Quakers were well-read: histories, travel narratives, political philosophies, travel writings, Greek and Roman classics, and scientific books were common. As early as the 1680s, Quaker leaders on both sides of the Atlantic were making provisions for a regular trade of Quaker approved books to the colonies. Reading was assumed to be an essential way to bolster the Quaker vision. By the mid-18th century, some Quaker libraries were identical to what would be expected of non-Quaker libraries. Woolman's list of books lent contained many titles that would have been found in other libraries, but his selection was more narrowly focused on Quaker and spiritual writings than someone like Anthony Benezet, or especially, Woolman's wealthy neighbor and friend, John Smith, who had an extensive library containing a wide range of fiction and non-fiction works. Altman, 'John Woolman's Reading,' 45-46, 64-65; Frederick Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), 17, 33. See also: Frederick Tolles, 'A Literary Quaker: John Smith of Burlington and Philadelphia,' *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 65, no. 3 (1941): 300-333.

⁷ Woolman mentioned à Kempis admirably, by name, in his journal. Woolman, 'Journal,' 75.

or in his dedication to the inward turn of the soul to the voice of the Spirit that à Kempis advocated.⁸

The *Imitation of Christ* teaches that the voice of Christ can be heard,⁹ spiritually, with the same directness and certainty as of an auditory sensation: '...doubly blessed are they who hear the Sound of Truth, not only in the outward Administrations of the Word, but by the inward and familiar Communications and Motions of infused Grace.'¹⁰ For Woolman, the eschatological reign of Christ was a spiritual government, enacted through the lives of the faithful and so entailed the immediacy of divine presence and divine command.¹¹

This theme of inward revelation and conformity to the inward 'motion' of the Spirit was also present in the writings of German cobbler and mystic Jakob Boehme (1575-1624),¹² an edited summary of whose work was in Woolman's list of books,¹³ and who argued that Christ's act of submission to the Father's will – in the act of crucifixion

⁸ See chapter 2 for Woolman's view of divine revelation.

⁹ Leigh Eric Schmidt has demonstrated that devout 18th century Christians heard spiritual things 'within multilayered devotional frameworks, whether the things heard were the oracular words of scripture, the inner whisperings of Christ, or the voices of angels and demons.' Schmidt claims that the *Imitation of Christ* was popular among 18th century reform and renewal movements, because of its emphasis on self-denial, prayer, meditation and emphasis on heightened sensitivity of spiritual senses for forming 'pious ways of hearing' the revelation of divine messages, and for obeying the transformation of self and society those messages entailed. Thus, to renounce outward, carnal wisdom, and to be attentive to the voice of God in one's soul was a primary way of being 'led,' and for shaping the contours of social structures, and would even lead to perfection. Schmidt notes that the reforms of the 18th century had common among them an attention to divine leading and inward divine teaching that were appropriated as essential and valid ways of understanding outward reality. Woolman resonated with this, and his reading, along with the Quaker tradition he operated in, served to enhance his sensitivity to this type of spiritual epistemology. 'Many of the most influential words in evangelical circles were not spoken between people and were not necessarily even heard aloud, but were listened to within, a hearkening.' Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 40. See also chapter 2 and 6.3.2.

¹⁰ à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, 119–120.

¹¹ See chapter 2.

¹² Boehme's writings were extremely controversial in his day, and were banned by German church leadership. Peter Erb, 'Introduction,' in *Jacob Boehme: The Way to Christ, The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 6.

¹³ John Woolman, 'Ledger B.'

– made salvation possible for all, and must be mirrored in each individual's 'yieldedness' to God's will.¹⁴ Boehme's concept of 'yieldedness' carries connotations of submission, resignation, and relinquishing one's own will, and is most often translated from the German in those forms.¹⁵ In a state of 'yieldedness' the individual was united to divine love and redeemed from a state subject to divine wrath.¹⁶ Boehme's spirituality of 'yieldedness', or 'resignation', shows overlap with Woolman's theology of 'resignation,' especially as it opens up a new spiritual state on earth that makes available eschatological promises.¹⁷

'It is real Resignation,' the editor wrote in the volume of Boehme that Woolman owned, 'that brings a Death upon Self-hood, and that must continually be performed, that the Enmity being mortified, the resigned Will may become an Instrument in God's Hand, to be agitated thereby; for his Servants we are whom we yield Obedience unto.'¹⁸ Woolman might have had this type of transformation of self in mind when he argued that in 'ceasing' from attempts to accumulate prestige and material possessions, a person could be transformed, spiritually, in the way that a camel must be altered in substance to fit through the eye of a needle.¹⁹ Similar, too, was Woolman's assertion that the continuance of a state of 'resignation' would lead him to act according to the teaching of Christ's kingdom on earth and to publicly renounce slavery, despite opposition: 'that setting aside all views of self-interest and the friendship of this world, I might stand

¹⁴ Michael L. Birkel and Jeff Bach, 'Introduction,' in *Genius of the Transcendent: Mystical Writings of Jakob Boehme* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2010), 8.

¹⁵ Jakob Boehme, *Genius of the Transcendent: Mystical Writings of Jakob Boehme*, ed. Michael L. Birkel and Jeff Bach (Boston: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2010), 95.

¹⁶ Birkel and Bach, 'Introduction,' 7–8.

¹⁷ Birkel and Bach, 'Introduction,' 8; Cyril O'Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse: Jacob Boehme's Haunted Narrative* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002).

¹⁸ Jakob Behmen, *Jacob Behmen's Theosophick Philosophy Unfolded*, ed. Edmund Taylor (London: Printed for Tho. Salusbury, 1691), n.p.

¹⁹ See. 2.1.1 a).

fully resigned to his holy will.²⁰

For Boehme, 'resignation' and the death of self led to the new divine-life, liberated to participate in Eternity on earth.²¹ Entrance into the nature of God and eternity, through resignation of the self-will, was a common theme in Boehme's writing, as he advocated the faithful to 'depart from Self-will... [and immerse one's self] into the single Love of God,'²² and to overcome and kill 'implacable Lust thirsting for Domination.'²³ 17th century Quaker leader, Francis Howgill,²⁴ stated a similar sentiment when he described how waiting in the 'Spirit of Truth' would alert the faithful 'when Motions and Temptations unto Sin arise...'²⁵ He argued that 'as the Creature is still, and waiteth in that which manifesteth and singly keeps in his Mind to [the Spirit],' it would vanquish 'those lusts which do arise' and draw the mind singly to the secret workings of the inward Spirit.²⁶ Renunciation of the carnal self, Boehme wrote, and as echoed in Howgill,²⁷ would lead to 'the Liberty of God in resignation to his Love-will.'²⁸ This concept resonated with Woolman's belief that in 'humble resignation' he was 'united to God,' and that, in the true-self in God, he was so transformed as to be perfected in God's

²⁰ See. 2.1.1 a).

²¹ Boehme wrote:

The End of Time may be demonstrated in the regenerated Children, thus; when the Holy Fire of God on the Altar in the Soul, hath separated the Earthy part from the new Man, so that by resignation of the Will, the Love flame is raised up, the Spirit of that Man entreth [sic] into God, and in a measure into such rest as ends the multiplicity, and possesseth [sic] the Eternal Unity.

Behmen, *Jacob Behmen's Theosophick Philosophy*, 206.

²² Behmen, *Jacob Behmen's Theosophick Philosophy*, 369, 387, 222-223, 264.

²³ Behmen, *Jacob Behmen's Theosophick Philosophy*, 228.

²⁴ Howgill is among the authors on Woolmans list of books. Woolman, 'Ledger B'.

²⁵ Francis Howgil [Howgill], *The Dawning of the Gospel-Day and Its Light and Glory Discovered: By a Faithful and Valiant Follower of the Lamb, and Labourer in the Work and Service of God, and a Sufferer for the Testimony of Jesus, Francis Howgil, Who Died a Prisoner for the Truth in Appleby Goal in the County of Westmerland, the Twentieth Day of the Eleaventh Moneth, One Thousand Six Hundred and Sixty Eight* (London, 1676), 123.

²⁶ Howgil, *Dawning of the Gospel-Day*, 123.

²⁷ Howgil, *Dawning of the Gospel-Day*, 123.

²⁸ Behmen, *Jacob Behmen's Theosophick Philosophy*, 365.

will and experienced the newness of all things under Christ's government.²⁹

5.1.2 Spiritualised Eschatology

Woolman's reading often linked ideas of inward spiritual intimacy to the divine, and an eschatological fulfillment that included the transformation of self and society.

Boehme emphasized the inward 'millennium of the spirit' above a literal Second Coming, and promoted the inward experience of the Spirit and its freedom as the core metrics of true religion.³⁰ Speaking to the inward Spirit, Boehme declared, 'thou maist [sic] enlighten the dark Forms of my Immortal Soul to know and live to God.'³¹ Early Quaker leader William Dewsberry, who Woolman mentioned in his writings and who is on his list of books,³² urged Quakers to dwell 'in the true silence of your Spirits, to wait in the Light for the unlimited Spirit of the Lord... to put an end to Sin, and to bring in everlasting Righteousness...'³³ Howgill wrote similarly, 'wait in the Measure of the Light in you, by which he reveals himself... [in] all who follow him through the Denyal [sic] of all, and to the loosing of all for him...'³⁴ This spiritualism resonated with Woolman's writings, who, at the moment of conversion, experienced the inward 'cross' to 'open' the leadings of the Spirit and, thus, from day to day, to be more 'enlightened' in the life and knowledge of God.³⁵ Woolman's religious reading was focused on those sources that

²⁹ See 2.1.1 and 4.2.

³⁰ Andrew Weeks considers Boehme to be a predecessor to early Quaker spiritualism. Andrew Weeks, *Boehme: An Intellectual Biography of the Seventeenth-Century Philosopher and Mystic* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991), 38.

³¹ Behmen, *Jacob Behmen's Theosophick Philosophy*, 222.

³² Woolman, 'Ledger B'; Woolman, 'Journal,' 304; Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind,' 455.

³³ William Dewsberry [Dewsberry], *The Faithful Testimony of That Antient Servant of the Lord, and Minister of the Everlasting Gospel William Dewsberry: In His Books, Epistles and Writings, Collected and Printed for Future Service* (London: Printed and sold by Andrew Sowle, 1689), 20.

³⁴ Howgil, *Dawning of the Gospel-Day*, 50.

³⁵ See 2.2.1.

reinforced the activity of the Spirit in the life of believer, and that emphasised how this activity led to a different type of existence, one in which the promises of the perfected and harmonious heavenly life would be enacted on earth. Woolman mostly rejected Boehme's alchemical and speculative language,³⁶ and Howgill's and Dewsberry's polemics,³⁷ but he focused on the pietistic and spiritualist elements within their writings in such a way as to make possible a christopresentism that could sustain a spiritual christocracy. In this sense, Altman was correct that Woolman was a 'mystic,'³⁸ but, when applied to Woolman's theology, we can see that 'mysticism' was not an end in itself, but rather one that was elemental to a broader and comprehensive apocalyptic eschatology. Woolman's reading linked christopresentism with an inward apocalyptic eschatology, and probably shaped his understanding of that connection.

The *Imitation of Christ*, though, represents an exception, in Woolman's reading, to the pairing of the inward immediacy of Christ and the eschatological consummation of human destiny in God's will. à Kempis' writings are more clearly 'mystical' in the traditional sense. That is, à Kempis' writings are not apocalyptic, because, while they do purport an immediacy of divine presence, and even a link between the divine presence and God's kingdom, that link did not entail human collective destiny, nor the social and spiritual transformation of world affairs into consistency with God's ultimate intent for human destiny.³⁹ à Kempis viewed the earth as a place of trial that the faithful would escape, and not as a place of terrestrial salvation and eschatological fulfillment, as Woolman did.⁴⁰ Thus, à Kempis would admonish his reader: 'seek a Future and Spiritual

³⁶ Behmen, *Jacob Behmen's Theosophick Philosophy*, 297.

³⁷ Howgil, *Dawning of the Gospel-Day*, 58; Dewsberry, *Faithful Testimony of William Dewsberry*, 101.

³⁸ Altman, 'John Woolman's Reading,' 252–253; See my own discussion of Woolman as a mystic in 2.1.

³⁹ à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, 199.

⁴⁰ à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, 199. See chapter 4.

Kingdom,⁴¹ because there would be no 'Triumph' in this life.⁴² For à Kempis, inward attention to the movements of the Spirit was motivated by his view that the earth was the proving ground for a future heavenly state, and, as such, was a matter of personal, rather than collective, destiny.⁴³ Woolman admired à Kempis for his focus on divine revelation,⁴⁴ but incorporated that mysticism into a spiritualised apocalypticism similar to that of the early Quakers he read.

There are, though, important differences between Woolman's theology of divine immediacy, and the apocalypticism it sustained, and that of the early Quakers Woolman read. First, even though Woolman shared a christopresentism with those he read, and felt commissioned to be a 'trumpet' through which God's message was proclaimed,⁴⁵ he did not share the early Quaker habit of 'direct address' on behalf of the divine.⁴⁶ This point constitutes a difference between Woolman's and early Quaker's expectations for how God would act in society. Dewsbury wrote to Oliver Cromwell: 'Thus saith the

⁴¹ à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, 166.

⁴² à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, 244.

⁴³ Viviano defines eschatology as referring to the final destiny of the individual, and to the final destiny of all humanity, or the elect:

Eschatology treats such subjects as resurrection from the dead, the particular and general judgment, heaven, hell (Gehenna), the intermediate state, purgatory, eternal life (beatific vision), the immortality of the soul, the kingdom of God, and the return or (second) coming (Parousia) of Christ; in brief, final salvation or damnation... The term apocalyptic covers a narrower range of topics. Its viewpoint is generally concerned with visions of humanity's *collective* future, both in this world and in a heavenly eternity, often expressed in the formula "the kingdom [or reign or kingship] of God..."

Benedict Viviano, 'Eschatology and the Quest for the Historical Jesus,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry Walls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 74; à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, 24.

⁴⁴ Woolman, 'Journal,' 75.

⁴⁵ See 3.1.

⁴⁶ 'Direct address' was common among 18th century Quakers. Elizabeth Stirredge, whose journal Woolman owned, wrote: 'Hear what the Lord hath committed unto my charge concerning thee. As thou hast been the cause of making many desolate, so will the Lord lay thee desolate.' Elizabeth Stirredge, 'The Life and Christian Testimony of That Faithful Servant of the Lord, Elizabeth Stirredge, Who Departed This Life at Her House at Hemstead, In Herfordshire, in the Seventy-Second Year of Her Age. Written by Her Own Hand.,' in *The Friends' Library: Comprising Journals, Doctrinal Treatises, and Other Writings of Members of the Religious Society of Friends*, ed. William Evans and Thomas Evans, vol. 2 (Philadelphia, PA: Joseph Rakestraw, 1838), 192; Woolman, 'Ledger B.'

Lord God of Heaven and Earth to thee, *Oliver Cromwell*, Why dost thou slight my Counsel, and harden thy Heart against it, which I declare to thee by my Sons and Daughters...⁴⁷ Even though Woolman understood himself to be a prophetic figure, who proclaimed God's vision for human affairs,⁴⁸ he did not experience his role as the mediator of divine 'direct address;' he never said 'Thus saith the Lord... to thee...' He did declare the contents of 'direct address,' in that he condemned the behaviours that God had revealed to him as sinful, but this declaration of the contents of 'direct address,' rather than the address itself, is one step removed from the authority assumed by early Quakers. Whereas Woolman's proclamation could be interpreted within the realm of human opinion,⁴⁹ regardless of whether or not he regarded his message as such, for early Quakers and their hearers, there was no mistaking the authority they claimed. The lack of 'direct address' speech in his writings demonstrates that Woolman was conscientious about what he appropriated from his reading of early Quakers. It also suggests that Woolman did not experience divine immediacy in the same way as the early Quakers he read. His experience was on the plane of conviction, impression, and leading, rather than on that of vocalization and 'direct address.'

This difference in the way divine immediacy was expressed gains even greater focus when examined alongside the difference of Second Coming language. For Dewsberry, the Second Coming of Christ was an inward, spiritual event, but that was experienced with imagery as if it were an outward, literal occurrence:

⁴⁷ Dewsberry, *Faithful Testimony of William Dewsberry*, 4. Emphasis original.

⁴⁸ See 2.2 and chapter 3.

⁴⁹ Indeed, Woolman's message was, at times, relegated to the realm of opinion. Woolman's supporter, Esther Tuke, argued that not everyone would be called to live in the manner that Woolman lived. Her addressee, apparently, had considerable misgivings about Woolman. Tuke's letter sounds like an apology for Woolman, but, also, comes across as suggesting the one could 'pick and choose' what pieces of Woolman's message to learn from, such as his abstention from the use of luxury goods or his undyed attire. Esther Tuke to 'Friend', 10mo 1772, Swarthmore College, Friends Historical Library.

behold Him, who ascended over all the power of Hell, and Death, and Darkness, who now in like manner is descended, whose coming we behold in the Clouds with Power and great Glory... *For as the Lightning is from the East unto the West, so is the Appearance of the Son of Man...* O let your Eyes be all fixed on him...⁵⁰

Early Quakers spiritualised the Second Coming, and the reign of Christ in their hearts.⁵¹ However, this spiritualisation of the Second Coming did not imply that it was any less visible, audible, tangible or real of an event than if it had occurred outwardly. Likewise, the reign of Christ in the hearts of the faithful was a spiritualisation of an event that was still experienced in all the imagery and power as if it had been an outward event.⁵² In other words, early Quaker apocalypticism was tangible and physical in *content*, but spiritual in *mode*.

Thus, early Quaker apocalypticism was contingent on a 'category mistake,'⁵³ in which inward, spiritual dispositions were described in terms of natural, physical elements and events, such as the physical objects of clouds and lightning, which cannot literally be ascribed to inward, spiritual events.⁵⁴ This 'category mistake' was an incredibly effective and persuasive means for venting the palpable revolutionary and apocalyptic sentiments of the mid-17th century.⁵⁵

In contrast, even though Woolman could claim intimacy with the divine

⁵⁰ Dewsberry, *Faithful Testimony of William Dewsberry*, 241–242. Emphasis is original.

⁵¹ Douglas Gwyn, *The Covenant Crucified: Quakers and the Rise of Capitalism* (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1995), 110, 115.

⁵² Dewsberry, *Faithful Testimony of William Dewsberry*, 17.

⁵³ A 'category mistake' ascribes to something of one category, attributes that should only be ascribed to something of another category. Wolfram, Sybil. 'category mistake.' In *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*: Oxford University Press, 2005. <http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.spl.org:2048/view/10.1093/acref/9780199264797.001.0001/acref-9780199264797-e-353>.

⁵⁴ Dewsberry, *Faithful Testimony of William Dewsberry*, 241–242.

⁵⁵ The alienation of religious controls and political disillusionment in the aftermath of the English civil war was compounded in an environment of anxiety and eschatological expectation. Moore, *Light in Their Consciences*, 66; Barnes, 'Images of Hope and Despair,' 163.

presence, he experienced the reign and transformation of Christ as a *spiritual event*, and not as a *spiritualisation of a literal event*. For Woolman, the apocalypse was spiritual in *content* and spiritual in *mode*. Woolman's insight, which makes it impossible to define him in exclusively quietistic terms, was that the spiritual event made claims upon human affairs, and, in fact, was a realising of divine eschatological purposes. Both the early Quaker experience, and Woolman's, are consistent with apocalyptic theologies, but Woolman's was that of a pietistic spiritualism,⁵⁶ rather than that of the spiritualised cataclysms experienced by early Quakers.

These core differences between Woolman's and early Quaker apocalypticism notwithstanding, Woolman would have found in his reading broad support for the main contours of his eschatology, such as the earth as the place where God's ultimate purposes would be established, and the belief that God was, as Howgill put it, already 'arising to execute [*sic*] his Judgment in the Earth.'⁵⁷ The realising nature of early Quaker eschatology, like Woolman's, created a sense of urgency that called for an immediate response and, when experienced in the life of the faithful, established the believer in a new, perfected situation before God. 'The Bridegroom is come, and is coming,' Howgill wrote.⁵⁸ And, on his deathbed, Dewsberry stated 'that a Dreadful terrible Day is at hand, and will certainly come to pass; but the Time when I cannot say.'⁵⁹ Early Quaker views of 'end time' imminence was dissociated from speculative eschatological chronologies, and provides precedent for the temporal liminality Woolman also claimed.⁶⁰ The

⁵⁶ Barnes, 'Images of Hope and Despair,' 174–175. See also: James H. Moorehead, 'Apocalypticism in Mainstream Protestantism, 1800 to the Present,' in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism*, ed. Bernard McGinn, John J. Collins, and Stephen Stein (NY: Continuum, 2003), 471.

⁵⁷ Howgill, *Dawning of the Gospel-Day*, 26. See 4.1 on Woolman's realising eschatology.

⁵⁸ Howgill, *Dawning of the Gospel-Day*, 34.

⁵⁹ Dewsberry, *Faithful Testimony of William Dewsberry*., n.p.

⁶⁰ See 4.1.1.

spiritual *parousia* was one in which the recipient was already established into the fact of an eschatological event that had not yet been fulfilled.⁶¹ For the early Quakers, this realising eschatology was part of a revolutionary apocalypticism in which they were the vanguard force that would establish God's 'new earth,' often employing violent and military language to describe the spiritual revolution that they thought they led.⁶² Early Quaker apocalyptic eschatology had a short idea of 'end time,' a view of imminence that emphasised the presently occurring event of fulfillment on earth, but did not emphasize the era of universal peace and prosperity that would exist in the new world God was bringing about.⁶³ Woolman's apocalypticism, in contrast, was not revolutionary, but reformational,⁶⁴ conceiving of 'end time' in a longer sequence that included early Quakers before him and the future universal establishment of the peaceable kingdom.⁶⁵

There is, also, good reason to suspect that Woolman's combination of mystical introspection and spiritual eschatology was found in his devotional reading,⁶⁶ especially his reading of Boehme, who united those two aspects in his theology. Boehme wrote that the prayer, 'Thy Kingdom come,' comes to be when the sinner learns that he has no

⁶¹ See 4.1.1.

⁶² Moore, *Light in Their Consciences*, 66; Howgil, *Dawning of the Gospel-Day*, 26–27.

⁶³ McGinn argues that the 'imminence' of the end took on a variety of meanings for apocalyptic groups. For some, the 'end time' was a point after which nothing else would happen in history. For others, the 'end time' included both the time of trial and the time of glory after the apocalypse and could indicate a long period of time or a short one. For example, there is a distinction between a belief in the 'end time' in which nothing more can take place in history, and the 'end time' in which much will happen, and which could be short or long, and include both the era of trial and the era of victory to come after it. Bernard McGinn, 'Introduction: Apocalyptic Spirituality,' in *Apocalyptic Spirituality, The Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 14.

⁶⁴ Barnes and McGinn have identified a diversity among apocalyptic views in regards to the purpose of apocalyptic sentiments and the temporal nearness of apocalyptic fulfillment, which illuminates the differences between early Quaker apocalyptic and Woolman's. Barnes has noted that apocalypticism was a pervasive theme in the 17th and 18th centuries, but that it served a variety of needs, ranging from supporting revolutionary commitments to providing spiritual comfort. Barnes, 'Images of Hope and Despair,' 162; Bernard McGinn, 'Introduction: Apocalyptic Spirituality,' 14.

⁶⁵ See 4.1.2.

⁶⁶ See 2.1.

right or title to regeneration, and that 'man's going out of himself... [is his] coming to himself.'⁶⁷ This 'Kingdom' is unknowable to reason, but requires that the sinner cast off all entanglements in pursuit of it, which included waiting, hating one's own life and suffering through self-crucifixion, 'for as the King entered by the Cross so must the Subjects.'⁶⁸ The connection between waiting, the inward revelation of the kingdom of God, and the crucifixion and resurrection of the self within time was picked up by early Quakers, who were probably influenced by Boehme,⁶⁹ as well as by Woolman.⁷⁰

Woolman held a deep distrust for reason, because he thought it was a human contrivance that dislocated the self from its truest interest, which was in Christ.⁷¹ The pathway to the spiritual realisation of the kingdom of God, through death to the carnal, alienated self, and resurrection to a spiritual state in which Woolman existed proleptically in the eschatological state foreseen by the prophet Isaiah,⁷² was present in Woolman's spiritual and early Quaker reading. The originality of Boehme's apocalypticism, in which the suffering of Christ was not merely a past event that predicated future eschatological fulfillment, but, rather, was understood by Boehme to be a teleological 'way station' through which the faithful must pass, provides evidence of Boehme's influence on Woolman given that Woolman appears to have borrowed it.⁷³ For Woolman, too, Christ's passion was a teleological event on the way to the government of Christ, in which the 'mind' of the suffering Christ in his passion was transmuted to the faithful in a way that redeemed them from sin, and brought forth

⁶⁷ Behmen, *Jacob Behmen's Theosophick Philosophy Unfolded*, 183.

⁶⁸ Behmen, *Jacob Behmen's Theosophick Philosophy Unfolded*, 185.

⁶⁹ Rufus Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1909), 494.

⁷⁰ See especially 4.1.3.

⁷¹ See 4.2.

⁷² See 4.1.1, 4.1.3 and 2.1.

⁷³ Behmen, *Jacob Behmen's Theosophick Philosophy*, 183, 185; O'Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse*, 171.

Christ's salvific powers.⁷⁴

'Waiting' and searching were held by Boehme to be apocalyptic acts, prior stages in the movement that led the seeker out of herself and into the life of Christ, not only in the sense of moral conformity to behavioural precepts, but of an eschatological state.⁷⁵ Similarly, Dewsberry believed the faithful were transformed when they 'sink down into the Eternal Power,' and, in language used several times by Woolman in various forms,⁷⁶ God would reign over world affairs through the faithful, who were established in Christ's 'pure peaceable Kingdom in the Hearts of his People.'⁷⁷ Dewsberry used the word 'pure' as a divine characteristic, or as a quality attributed to the saints, 196 times in the title Woolman probably owned.⁷⁸ Woolman used the word 'heavily'⁷⁹ to connote the same meaning as Dewsberry, and in similar formulations.⁸⁰ Jones argued that Woolman used 'pure' as a 'quietist word'⁸¹ in which the soul found 'crucifixion of self and the death of the "creature"' with the goal of a life of 'pure repose and contemplation.'⁸² While the word does have a tradition in continental Quietism,⁸³ Jones never fully considered that it's usage in Woolman's writings, or that of other 18th century Quakers, might be

⁷⁴ See 4.2.3.

⁷⁵ Behmen, *Jacob Behmen's Theosophick Philosophy*, 183.

⁷⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom,' 395; Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind and How It Is to Be Maintained,' 453; Woolman, 'Journal,' 177.

⁷⁷ Dewsberry, *Faithful Testimony of William Dewsberry*, 244.

⁷⁸ For example, Dewsberry used these configurations: 'pure peaceable...' p. 355; 'pure wisdom' pp. 1, 3, 17, 25; and, 'pure obedience' p. 32. This list of examples is not exhaustive, but a sample of phrases that were, also, used by Woolman, as shown below. Dewsberry, *Faithful Testimony of William Dewsberry*,

⁷⁹ Woolman used the term 'pure' 76 times in his journal alone.

⁸⁰ The following formulations are not exhaustive, but demonstrate that Woolman not only used the same word as Dewsberry as a descriptor of human and divine attributes, but he often did so in the same formulation: 'Pure Wisdom,' Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom,' 385; 'Pure and Peaceable,' Woolman, 'Conversations on the True Harmony of Mankind and How it may be Promoted,' 473; 'Pure Obedience,' Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom,' 393.

⁸¹ Jones, *Later Periods of Quakerism*, 67.

⁸² Jones, 'Quietism,' 4.

⁸³ For example, the word appears in the title of François Fénelon's *The Archbishop of Cambrai's Dissertation on Pure Love*. There is, however, only circumstantial evidence that Woolman was familiar with any of the writings of the continental quietists. Altman, 'John Woolman's Reading,' 142.

informed by the Quaker tradition. The term, in Woolman and Dewsberry, presupposes a dualism between the transformed, eternal nature of things, and the alienated, fallen nature. Jones' definition of 'pure' in a quietist context concentrated on the crucifixion of the self, and neglected the resurrection and liberation of that self in which human action was freed from bondage and capable of redemptive activity, and was a part of the fulfillment of God's universal purposes on earth.⁸⁴ Altman, also, contended that Woolman's use of 'pure' came from Dewsberry and the Quaker tradition.⁸⁵

Like Woolman after him, Dewsberry's vision of the 'peaceable Kingdom' was derived from Isaiah 2 in which 'Swords shall be beaten into Plow-shares, and Spears into Pruning-hooks.'⁸⁶ Given Woolman's familiarity with Dewsberry and the similar phrasing of eschatological concepts, it is likely that Dewsberry's notion of Christ's inward reign and eschatological realisation of the kingdom in the faithful influenced Woolman.⁸⁷ However, Dewsberry placed the 'peaceable Kingdom' of Christ within the context of Christ's spiritual war against sin and imminent universal victory, and maintained the 'category mistake' that typified early Quaker apocalypticism: 'he will break the battle out of the Earth... and all the Nations that are saved, shall walk in his Light... who was dead, but now alive.'⁸⁸ Woolman mostly refrained from describing the advance of the peaceable kingdom in military terms, but he did insist that God would bring judgment on those who rejected it.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Jones, *Later Periods of Quakerism*, 4–5.

⁸⁵ Altman, 'John Woolman's Reading of the Mystics,' 112; Altman, 'John Woolman's Reading,' 205.

⁸⁶ Dewsberry, *Faithful Testimony of William Dewsberry*, 245; Howgil, *Dawning of the Gospel-Day*, 400.

⁸⁷ Altman contends that Woolman's 1770 pleurisy vision, in which Woolman felt 'commanded to open the vision,' reads in the 'same apocalyptic styles as many passages of William Dewsberry.' Altman, 'John Woolman's Reading,' 192–193. See 4.1.1 b) and 4.3.2.

⁸⁸ Dewsberry, *Faithful Testimony of William Dewsberry*, 245.

⁸⁹ See 4.3.1.

a) The Government of Christ

In addition to the language of a 'peaceable kingdom,' Woolman, also, described God's reign in the hearts of the faithful as the 'Government of Christ,' a phrase that could bear Fox's influence. Woolman quoted Fox's 'Book of Doctrinals,' which, in places, used variations on the phrase 'government of Christ' to refer to Christ's reign in the lives of the faithful, and, especially, in the correct comportment – 'Gospel order' – of the Church.⁹⁰ However, Woolman's quotation of Fox's 'Doctrinals' was written during his time in England in 1772, and was probably the result of staying in homes with extensive libraries as he travelled. Woolman's use of the phrase before his 1772 trip to England might have come from other sources.⁹¹

Fox also wrote, 'An Epistle concerning the Government of Christ, and his Peace, of whose kingdom there shall be no end.'⁹² Fox specifically linked the 'Government of Christ' to Isaiah 9:7, which prophesied the coming of a messianic ruler.⁹³ Fox argued that Christ governed in the 'hearts of his people' and that this government directed and ordered the faithful life.⁹⁴ Fox linked this state of being governed by Christ with the life of the Spirit on earth but, he warned, those who rejected the Spirit would not know Christ's 'peaceable government.'⁹⁵ Woolman, too, argued that those in whom Christ dwelled could participate in the 'increase of this peaceable government' in the world.⁹⁶

The main difference between Fox and Woolman was in their understandings of the

⁹⁰ Woolman, 'On a Sailor's Life,' 507.

⁹¹ Woolman, 'On a Sailor's Life,' 507.

⁹² George Fox, 'Epistle CCCLXXII: An Epistle Concerning the Government of Christ, and His Peace, of Whose Kingdom There Shall Be No End,' in *The Works of George Fox*, vol. 8 (Marcus T.C. Gould, 1831), 203–210.

⁹³ Fox, 'Concerning the Government of Christ,' 203.

⁹⁴ Fox, 'Concerning the Government of Christ,' 203.

⁹⁵ Fox, 'Concerning the Government of Christ,' 206.

⁹⁶ See 4.1.1 b) 3). See also: Kershner, "Lamb's War" or "Peaceable Government of Christ"?

implications of the 'government of Christ.' For Fox, it was an apocalyptic concept linked with the behaviour of Quakers and the ultimate spread of Quakerism. For Woolman, the phrase also signified an apocalyptic concept, but one that was forged in the trials of embodying a specific theologically-social vision.⁹⁷ That is, Fox emphasized that the inward spiritual transformation commensurate with Christ's government was the consummate eschatological event itself.⁹⁸ In contrast, Woolman believed the inward reign of Christ was the first, necessary step toward the conformation of all human affairs to consistency with God's intent.⁹⁹ Therefore, in Woolman's usage, the 'government of Christ' carried a more expansive and political connotation, because it was descriptive of Christ's reign over specifically economic and social structures, a particularity of definition that Fox did not give it.

b) Babylon

Set against the peaceable kingdom of Christ, or the Government of Christ, in Woolman's reading, was a typological representation of Babylon.¹⁰⁰ For Howgill and Dewsberry, the 'merchants of Babylon' represented the religious hierarchy, ritual forms, and 'outward professions' of their day, which they thought prevented people from the true and intimate knowledge of God in Quaker worship.¹⁰¹ Likewise, John Bradford, who Woolman quoted, was recorded by John Foxe to equate 'Rome' with 'Babilon'

⁹⁷ See 2.2 and 3.2.

⁹⁸ Fox, 'Concerning the Government of Christ,' 205–206.

⁹⁹ See 3.2 and 4.1.3.

¹⁰⁰ See also 4.1.1 b) 2).

¹⁰¹ Howgill wrote that the 'Merchants were Bishops, Arch-Bishops, Deacons, Arch-Deacons, Pryors, Covents, Vicars, Commissaries, chapters, Chancellors, Vice-Chancellors, Doctors of Divinity, Batchellors of Divinity, Doctors of Art, Masters of Art, Batchellors of Art, Priests and Curates.' Howgil, *Dawning of the Gospel-Day*. 149, 376; Dewsberry, *Faithful Testimony of William Dewsberry*, 90, 288–290.

[sic].¹⁰² Woolman found in his reading the idea that Babylon was a false form of worship, which hindered and persecuted the true worship of God, and that the restoration of true worship was of eschatological importance.¹⁰³ Moreover, Boehme conflated 'Babel' and 'Babylon' as a representation of the 'World's Trinity'¹⁰⁴ that deceived humanity, and that 'Babel must fall' in the heart of the faithful for God's reign in one's life to be consummated.¹⁰⁵ Woolman also conflated 'Babel' and 'Babylon,'¹⁰⁶ and, like Boehme, early Quakers, and Foxe, applied the term 'Babylon' to his understanding of the spiritual evils of his day.¹⁰⁷ However, for Woolman, the 'merchants of Babylon' were, actually, the 'merchants' of his day, and the economic system they supported. His concern was not a sectarian one linked to particular forms of worship, but a universal vision in which systemic forces of evil and corruption, most visible in the transatlantic slave economy, were overthrown and a new world of the Spirit was ushered in.¹⁰⁸ Woolman continued the legacy of applying eschatological symbols to current events that he found in his books, but Woolman did so in a way that was less sectarian than Dewsbury, Howgill, and Foxe, and, yet, more temporalised and contextualised in the socio-political affairs of his own day than Boehme's speculative apocalypticism.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰² John Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online (TAMO)*, 1563 Edition (Sheffield, UK: HRI Online Publications, 2011), 1247, <http://www.johnfoxe.org>.

¹⁰³ Anton Houtepen, 'Apocalyptic and the Kingdom of God: Christian Eschatology and the "Pursuit of the Millennium"', *Exchange* 28, no. 4 (1999): 291.

¹⁰⁴ Behmen, *Jacob Behmen's Theosophick Philosophy*, 180.

¹⁰⁵ Behmen, *Jacob Behmen's Theosophick Philosophy*, 395.

¹⁰⁶ See Appendix B.

¹⁰⁷ See Appendix B and 4.1.1 b) 2).

¹⁰⁸ See 4.1.1 b) 2).

¹⁰⁹ O'Regan contends that Boehme's sophisticated and complex symbolic language 'taps into the upper registers of post-Reformation apocalyptic interpretation, and especially its speculative forms, that leave behind the chronicles of salvation history, the diatribes against the contemporary situation of fallenness and apostasy, and the obsession with signs and prognostications of the end.' O'Regan, *Gnostic Apocalypse*, 162.

c) Suffering and Vindication

There is, perhaps, no better illustration of the degree in which Woolman temporalised his apocalypticism, than in his incorporation and idealisation of suffering,¹¹⁰ and hope for vindication, themes that are prominent in his reading of early Quakers. For example, early Quaker 'prophetess'¹¹¹ Elizabeth Stirredge often recounted how she and fellow Quakers were able to suffer for Truth's sake. She implied a necessary link between suffering and righteousness.¹¹² She told 'justices,' in the act of distraining Quaker goods for their crime of meeting for worship, that 'it was in vain to be found striving against the Lord and his people; [the justice's] work would not prosper; for the great God of heaven and earth would be too strong for them.'¹¹³ Preservation in suffering, Stirredge advocated, would not only lead to a future vindication, but would establish the faithful in a perfected state on earth that embodied, in the present, the realising eschatological hope.¹¹⁴ Likewise, Dewsbury addressed letters to 'Dear suffering Brethren' and addressed their experiences within an eschatological framework in which 'Tribulations' and the 'Kingdom of Patience in Christ Jesus' heightened expectations of divine vindication and triumph.¹¹⁵ Christ, Dewsbury wrote,

numbers the daies [*sic*] of your Sufferings, and when they are accomplished, will plead the Cause of his People in the day he will be revealed in flames of Fire, rendering Vengeance upon all that know him not... then shall your Innocency with all the Elect be cleared, in the sight

¹¹⁰ See especially 3.1.2.

¹¹¹ Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 307.

¹¹² Stirredge, 'Life and Christian Testimony of Elizabeth Stirredge,' 201–202.

¹¹³ Stirredge, 'Life and Christian Testimony of Elizabeth Stirredge,' 192.

¹¹⁴ Stirredge, 'Life and Christian Testimony of Elizabeth Stirredge,' 194.

¹¹⁵ Dewsbury, *Faithful Testimony of William Dewsbury*, 204.

of all people...¹¹⁶

For the early Quakers, God's kingdom was not equated with a future 'golden age,' but was a present reality, an eschatological state in which the saints dwelled and acted according to God's will in and amongst the persecutions and trials they experienced.¹¹⁷ Thus, Dewsberry encouraged the suffering faithful that 'the Kingdom of this World shall become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall break the battle out of the Earth; his Government shall be over all, and of his Dominion shall be no end.'¹¹⁸ Woolman redeployed this theology when he asserted divine vindication on behalf of the faithful, for Christ's 'dominion shall be from sea to sea' and that those who supported injustice 'shall be broken to pieces.'¹¹⁹

Woolman was influenced by the early Quaker belief that the gap between the world as it was and the world as God intended it to be was not a small matter, but that God's way called the faithful to suffer, persevere, and to expect divine vindication.¹²⁰ He also found this idea in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*.¹²¹ Martyrs like John Huss were models, for Woolman, of following God's leading until death: 'I hope and trust euen from the botome of myne hart, that God will not geue the victory vnto vnfaithfull and vnbeleuving

¹¹⁶ Dewsberry, *Faithful Testimony of William Dewsberry*, 204.

¹¹⁷ Dewsberry, *Faithful Testimony of William Dewsberry*, 354–355; Howgil, *Dawning of the Gospel-Day*; Houtepen, 'Apocalyptic and the Kingdom of God,' 304–305.

¹¹⁸ Howgill also called Quakers to expect divine vindication:

Therefore Dear Friends and Brethren, look not out, neither faint when you are tempted and tryed, but eye the Lord, who is near to deliver, and to administer Strength in Weakness, of which I do not doubt but you have felt, whose Arm is made bare, to save and to defend all the upright in Heart in the Hour of Tryal, and in the Time of Temptation, and your Work shall not be in Vain, for that which is ministred [sic] from the Life shall not pass away unfulfilled, but every one shall answer, and bear Witness unto it in the Day of the Lord.

Howgil, *Dawning of the Gospel-Day*, 370; Dewsberry, *Faithful Testimony of William Dewsberry*, 197.

¹¹⁹ See 4.3.2.

¹²⁰ See 2.2, chapter 3, 4.2 and 4.3.

¹²¹ Foxe, *TAMO*, 1246.

men, the whiche do willingly kicke and spurne against the truthe.¹²² The accounts of early Quakers and those Protestant Martyrs whose depictions were that of absolute devotion to Christ's leading – even if not the Quaker form of worship¹²³ – contributed to Woolman's idealisation of suffering, and understanding that these previous examples of faithfulness increased the spiritual urgency of his own day.¹²⁴ This sense of historical progression heightened his longing for eschatological vindication, and, he felt, justified his constant attempt to attribute eschatological meaning to the temporal and social events of his day.¹²⁵

5.1.3 Section Summary

Apocalypticism emerges within a context, but the relationship of that context to the form of apocalyptic sentiments expressed can be variable.¹²⁶ Thus, McGinn has argued that apocalyptic sentiments are not 'caused' by moments of crisis and dislocation, but rather, 'the apocalyptic mentality is a particular form of pre-understanding rather than a mere way of responding.'¹²⁷ Apocalypticists are those individuals who are more sensitive to change than many of their peers, and more 'in need of a religious structure' to help them 'give meaning to the anxieties that always accompany existence and change.'¹²⁸ In line with the Quaker tradition, Woolman demonstrated this 'pre-

¹²² Foxe, *TAMO*, 245. For Woolman's use of Huss, see: Woolman, 'Journal,' 76.

¹²³ See 2.2.1.

¹²⁴ See 4.1.2.

¹²⁵ See 4.1 and 4.3.

¹²⁶ McGinn, 'Introduction: Apocalyptic Spirituality,' 7–8.

¹²⁷ McGinn, 'Introduction: Apocalyptic Spirituality,' 8.

¹²⁸ McGinn, 'Introduction: Apocalyptic Spirituality,' 8.

The crisis of the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes did not "cause" the birth of apocalypticism in intertestamental Judaism any more than the crisis of the twelfth-century Church caused the new apocalyptic ideas of Joachim of Fiore. A sense of present crisis might be better described as the occasion or context rather than the motivating force in these cases. While it is true that some of the major stages in the history of apocalyptic traditions have arisen within situations of broken continuities, or of serious

understanding' and, so, actively looked for temporal issues on which to apply this interpretive framework, namely the apostasy he associated with the transatlantic slave-economy and 'mammon.'¹²⁹ By attending to the government of Christ, already present in the faithful, Woolman felt the true Church would persevere, and, like Stirredge before him,¹³⁰ embody eschatological vindication in a perfected state united to the mind of Christ.¹³¹

Woolman's paradigm of suffering and vindication within a this-worldly centered eschatology represents a difference from à Kempis' futurist eschatology, in which suffering, like joy, was appointed by divine 'Providence,' but did not have any connection to a this-worldly redemption.¹³² Rather, à Kempis believed suffering and joy were tests that threatened to distract Christians from their resignation to God, the results of which, would be seen in the next life.¹³³ For Woolman, and apocalypticists in general,¹³⁴ the ability to persevere in the midst of suffering and trial was related to the sense that they were an important part of God's 'reformation' in the world.¹³⁵ Because of this, Woolman called on his fellow colonists to resist apostasy, because the time of Christ's reign was near, and he had, in fact, already experienced the perfection, within

social anomie, many others have not. One person's sense of what constitutes a trial or crisis need not coincide with the general judgment of his time or with the later views of historians... Perhaps the apocalypticist might be better described as one on the lookout for crisis, rather than one who merely reacts to it when it happens. The apocalyptic mentality is a particular form of pre-understanding rather than a mere way of responding. More sensitive to change than the mass of their fellows, apocalypticists are more in need of a religious structure within which to absorb and give meaning to the anxieties that always accompany existence and change.

McGinn, 'Introduction: Apocalyptic Spirituality,' 8.

¹²⁹ See 4.1.1 b) 2).

¹³⁰ Stirredge, 'Life and Christian Testimony of Elizabeth Stirredge,' 193–194, 209.

¹³¹ See 4.2.

¹³² à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, 164.

¹³³ à Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, 164.

¹³⁴ McGinn, 'Introduction: Apocalyptic Spirituality,' 12–13.

¹³⁵ See 4.1.2.

himself, that would be established universally.¹³⁶

This analysis contends that Woolman was influenced by his reading. It, also, demonstrates that Woolman did not seek to replicate the tone or all of the ideas he encountered in his reading. Rather, Woolman selected readings from the mystical and early Quaker traditions that emphasized the ability of the soul to dwell in a state united to God's purposes, and to perfectly attend to the leading of God on earth. However, Woolman did not adopt the other-worldliness of à Kempis, but was consistent with the early Quaker tradition that linked the spiritual presence of Christ to eschatological events, an inward apocalypse of the heart. However, Woolman bears resemblance to the mystical tradition within his reading in that he experienced the inward presence of Christ as a spiritual event and not as a physical event that occurred inwardly, the 'category error' which shaped the language of early Quaker apocalypticism. As such, Woolman bears resemblance to the ideas in his reading, even as he demonstrated considerable autonomy in the way those ideas were appropriated into his theology.

5.2 Comparisons with Quaker Peers

Woolman was part of a group of reform-minded ministers who desired to shape Quaker behaviour, as well as the social and political life of Pennsylvania.¹³⁷ This section compares Woolman to other key reformers of his generation. These reformers were close friends, and worked together on the crafting of policy-shaping epistles, and served in leadership in PYM.¹³⁸ It would be simplistic, though, to expect to identify absolute

¹³⁶ See 4.2.4.

¹³⁷ See 1.2.2.

¹³⁸ John Churchman, 'An Account of the Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of That Faithful Minister of Christ, John Churchman, Late of Nottingham, in Pennsylvania' in *The Friends' Library: Comprising Journals, Doctrinal Treatises, and Other Writings of Members of the Religious Society*

ethical and theological conformity among these reformers. Instead, this study of Woolman's reform-minded peers identifies similarities, as well as high degrees of individuality and originality among the group. Moreover, even where the reformers demonstrated theological or ethical similarities with each other, there were often important qualitative differences. The overarching similarity that linked the reformers together, was a common belief that an outward struggle to transform society was the spiritual correlate of the inward struggle to obey the leadings of the Spirit.¹³⁹

This section compares Woolman and his contemporaries in terms of 1) inward revelation, 2) prophetic identity, 3) conversion narratives, and, 4) eschatology. This section is concluded with a summary in 5.2.5.

5.2.1. Inward Revelation

An inward attention to divine leading as the guide for outward living, was common among the mid-18th century reformers. Schmidt argues that Quaker reformers, as well as evangelicals, experienced a 'series of spiritual leadings, openings, and dreams' that superseded a settled understanding of religious devotion.¹⁴⁰ Churchman, who Marrietta describes as the first of the reformers,¹⁴¹ wrote in his journal that he felt led to give a message from God to a group of people, but did not always record what that

¹³⁹ *of Friends*, ed. William Evans and Thomas Evans, vol. 6 (Philadelphia: Printed by Joseph Rakestraw, 1842), 247–248; Altman, 'John Woolman's Reading,' 56; Samuel Fothergill, 'Memoirs of the Life and Gospel Labours of Samuel Fothergill, with Selections from His Correspondence. Also an Account of the Life and Travels of His Father, John Fothergill; and Notices of Some of His Descendants,' in *The Friends' Library: Comprising Journals, Doctrinal Treatises, and Other Writings of Members of the Religious Society of Friends*, ed. William Evans and Thomas Evans, vol. 9 (Philadelphia, PA: Joseph Rakestraw, 1845), 166; Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, 31.

¹⁴⁰ See: Edwina Newman and Judith Jennings, 'New Perspectives on Eighteenth-Century British Quaker Women,' *Quaker Studies* 14, no. 2 (2010): 173.

¹⁴¹ Schmidt, *Hearing Things*, 43.

¹⁴¹ Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 32.

message was,¹⁴² a journaling practice that Woolman also engaged in. This practice prioritized both divine immediacy and the ability of the human agent to faithfully relate God's message, over that of the content of the revelation itself.¹⁴³

Subjecting one's self to the divine revelation brought about a participation in the life of Christ, and was characteristic of the true faithful. Churchman wrote:

Our strength, preservation, health and peace stand in our entire subjection to the will of the Lord, whether in silence or speaking, suffering or reigning, still dwelling with the seed, Christ, in our own hearts; humbly waiting for, and feeling after his power, who is the resurrection and the life, and when he is pleased to appear, his children partake in measure of his glory!¹⁴⁴

For Churchman, obedience to divine leading and the subjection of self to the divine will brought with it specific outward actions under God's power, such as his audience before the Pennsylvania Assembly in which he attempted to dissuade them from appropriating monies for the French and Indian War,¹⁴⁵ an occasion of socio-political confrontation that Woolman quoted at length in his own journal.¹⁴⁶

Like Woolman, Churchman believed dreams were a method of divine revelation and recorded them as a way to support his conclusions about divine intent for the issues of his day.¹⁴⁷ Sometimes he believed his dreams were premonitions of divine judgment,¹⁴⁸ other times his dreams revealed a secret truth or new revelation, divinely aimed at the controversial issues confronting colonists.¹⁴⁹ All of these were common

¹⁴² Churchman, 'Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of John Churchman,' 257.

¹⁴³ Woolman, 'Journal,' 52; see also 3.1.

¹⁴⁴ Churchman, 'Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of John Churchman,' 185.

¹⁴⁵ Churchman, 'Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of John Churchman,' 22–202; Woolman, 'Journal,' 76–83.

¹⁴⁶ Woolman, 'Journal,' 78–83.

¹⁴⁷ Churchman, 'Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of John Churchman,' 220–222. See also, 2.1.2.

¹⁴⁸ Churchman, 'Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of John Churchman,' 222.

¹⁴⁹ Churchman, 'Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of John Churchman,' 243.

forms of spiritual knowledge for 18th century Quakers,¹⁵⁰ and dreaming and dream interpretation was not unique to Woolman, Churchman, or Quakers.¹⁵¹ Mechal Sobel notes that American culture was 'dream-infused' and that dream work helped people transition into the modern period by providing a new way of understanding the self and changing relationships to the 'alien other,' like slaves and Native Americans.¹⁵² Dream work was important for translating religious values into a changing cultural environment, and for providing a religious framework for addressing the developments of the mid- to late-18th century.

However, while dream work was common in the Revolutionary era, Woolman stands out from his peers in the nature of the symbols present in some of his dreams. Churchman's dreams were filled with symbols that implied revelatory divine interventions in human affairs, but the content of those revelatory dreams presupposed a fixed teleology in which dreams educated the recipient to the divine intent to be established in the future, but were not indicative of a sense of temporal liminality.¹⁵³ For instance, Churchman had a dream in which an 'angelic apparition' appeared to him and he saw 'curious stacks of corn' and an 'Indian clean washed from his grease and filth.'¹⁵⁴ Notwithstanding its racist undertones, this dream was a symbolic teaching of the spiritual equality of Native Americans. However, it presupposed a fixed relationship to eternity in which revelatory divine interventions were a normal part of human existence, but the gulf between the transcendent and the human recipient was never overcome in

¹⁵⁰ Carla Gerona, *Night Journeys: The Power of Dreams in Transatlantic Quaker Culture* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 140-142.

¹⁵¹ Mechal Sobel, *Teach Me Dreams: The Search for Self in the Revolutionary Era* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3-4.

¹⁵² Sobel, *Teach Me Dreams*, 4.

¹⁵³ See 4.1.1.

¹⁵⁴ Churchman, 'Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of John Churchman,' 243.

this life. Revelation, for Churchman, remained a matter of interventions from afar. Stanton used apocalyptic imagery in a dream based on Revelation 12:6, in which he dreamt himself 'as a little child,' and his 'mother' represented the church.¹⁵⁵ An 'enemy' sought Stanton's life but his 'mother' carried him into the 'wilderness, and we were preserved.'¹⁵⁶ Stanton's symbolic experience of divine protection was a typology of events in the book of Revelation: they intimate a degree of theological framing that is consistent with an apocalyptic way of understanding his trials, but, like Churchman, Stanton's use of symbols did not cross eternal thresholds, neither did he take on the role of the eschatological protagonist in the narrative of his visions like Woolman did.¹⁵⁷

In other words, whereas Churchman found his dreams helpful for guiding moral decisions,¹⁵⁸ and Stanton was given confidence that he would persevere in trials,¹⁵⁹ these dreams were not interpreted as precursors of eschatological consummation in the human heart, or in world affairs, as Woolman did.¹⁶⁰ Woolman's early dreams resembled Churchman's,¹⁶¹ but, by 1770, Woolman's dreams had developed a more deliberately apocalyptic symbology, so that the *telos* of divine purposes was realising on earth, and Woolman claimed that he had entered the eschaton spiritually.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁵ Daniel Stanton, 'A Journal of the Life, Travels & Gospel Labours of a Faithful Minister of Jesus Christ, Daniel Stanton, Late of Philadelphia, in the Province of Pennsylvania,' in *The Friends' Library: Comprising Journals, Doctrinal Treatises, and Other Writings of Members of the Religious Society of Friends*, ed. William Evans and Thomas Evans, vol. 12 (Philadelphia, PA: Joseph Rakestraw, 1848), 148.

¹⁵⁶ Stanton, 'Journal of Daniel Stanton,' 148.

¹⁵⁷ Stanton, 'Journal of Daniel Stanton,' 148. Cf. 4.1.1 and 4.1.3.

¹⁵⁸ See also: Gerona, *Night Journeys*, 140–142.

¹⁵⁹ Stanton, 'Journal of Daniel Stanton,' 148.

¹⁶⁰ Woolman described a temporal liminality in which the human recipient experienced the inward *parousia* and became a harbinger of Christ's imminent governance over world affairs. See 4.1.1 b).

¹⁶¹ See 2.1.2.

¹⁶² See 4.1.1 and 4.1.3. See also, Jon R. Kershner, 'Were John Woolman's 1770 Pleurisy Visions Apocalyptic Experiences?' (presented at the Centre for Postgraduate Quaker Studies, Birmingham, UK, June, 2012).

5.2.2 Prophetic Identity

Another interesting point of comparison among the 18th century reformers regards the nature of their prophetic identities, and the understandings of their divinely ordained responsibility to salvation history and human destiny. All of the reformers sought to correspond an inward spiritual experience with outward comportment, but not all of them understood themselves to be prophets like the Hebrew prophets Woolman emulated.¹⁶³ While Woolman wanted to change the course of human affairs to some extent, Fothergill, Churchman and Stanton were content to focus on the realm of Quaker affairs. It should be noted, though, that while the memoirs of Fothergill, Churchman and Stanton focused on Quaker affairs, they were compassionate people whose undocumented lives probably sought to positively affect the lives of non-Quakers, and, in fact, statements of purely sectarian concern sometimes coexisted with a more universal concern for humanity.

The record of Samuel Fothergill's ministry, for example, demonstrates that the sectarian focus of a minister's writings published for a Quaker audience did not preclude a larger scope of action and influence in non-sectarian arenas. In 1755 Fothergill exhibited considerable trepidation and uncertainty on the Quaker ability to act positively in the complex world of British geopolitical imperialism, and wrote that he was not concerned about the events of the French and Indian War because 'it is not my business, and have found it my concern to deny my curiosity in inquiring after news.'¹⁶⁴ Instead, he desired to 'draw Friends' minds to their own warfare, 'that as our hands cannot be active [in outward war], so our minds cannot be embroiled [in it], consistently with our

¹⁶³ See chapter 4.

¹⁶⁴ Fothergill, 'Memoirs of the Life of Samuel Fothergill,' 151.

testimony.¹⁶⁵ Fothergill, here, seems detached from the events of the world around him.

He expanded Quaker peace tendencies to such an extent that, to be faithful, Quakers could neither petition against the war, nor converse about it. Fothergill's position, here, is extreme, as neither Churchman¹⁶⁶ nor Woolman, advocated this kind of willful ignorance about the course of human affairs.¹⁶⁷ However, later in 1755, and into 1756, Fothergill began to pay more attention to geopolitical events, and reported news of the war, interpreting political events within a providential framework of divine judgment in his letters home.¹⁶⁸ Moreover, he later spearheaded a campaign among the affluent members of his home-town to raise money for poor relief.¹⁶⁹ Fothergill's original insular, sectarian position was not as absolute as it first appeared. Nonetheless, Fothergill's struggle to come to terms with the place of the Quaker minister in the realm of world events was not one that Woolman struggled with to the same degree.¹⁷⁰ Of the reformist journals and memoirs examined in this comparison, none spent as much time reflecting on the claims Christ's reign in the human heart made on world affairs as did Woolman.¹⁷¹

This differences among the leaders of the Quaker reforms is illustrated on the issue of slavery, because, as Soderlund notes, for many ministers interest in the

¹⁶⁵ Fothergill, 'Memoirs of the Life of Samuel Fothergill,' 151.

¹⁶⁶ Churchman included in his journal two of the same anti-war epistles that Woolman did, each with strong eschatological overtones of God's will breaking out on earth. See, Churchman, 'Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of John Churchman,' 235-236; Woolman, 'Journal,' 82-83, 85-86.

¹⁶⁷ See chapter 3.

¹⁶⁸ Fothergill, 'Memoirs of the Life of Samuel Fothergill,' 162, 170-171, 173.

¹⁶⁹ Fothergill, 'Memoirs of the Life of Samuel Fothergill,' 193.

¹⁷⁰ Woolman wrestled with how to act positively on behalf of God when, no matter what course of action he pursued, he would be implicated in that apostasy he sought to remedy. However, he was not conflicted on whether he should address world affairs, but about how to do so in a complex world. See Appendix A.

¹⁷¹ See chapter 3.

condition of blacks was secondary to their desire to purify the PYM.¹⁷² Stanton, with Woolman, was one of the members of a committee commissioned by PYM, in 1758, to visit and dissuade Quakers from slave-owning; yet, he rarely mentioned slavery in his journal.¹⁷³ Fothergill, also, hardly mentions slavery, and only when he linked it to a general observation of spiritual depravity.¹⁷⁴ Churchman only mentions the practice in reference to the divine judgment it will bring upon Philadelphia.¹⁷⁵ While the antislavery activity of Stanton, Fothergill, and Churchman exceeds what was accounted for in their writings, it is significant that they did not believe antislavery to be an important part of the spiritual autobiography they wanted to leave to succeeding generations.¹⁷⁶ Not only was slavery of secondary concern to that of corporate purification for these ministers, but the image they sought to portray effectively separated their inward experiences of divine immediacy from an outward application, and thus failed to present a compelling alternative to the dominant ethic of British imperialism. The historical record of their activities demonstrates a greater degree of engagement with the events of the day than they admitted in their self-portrayal, but none of them cast the prophetic, theologically-social vision that Woolman did, which suggests they were not fully clear how their actions in the physical realm related to salvation-history.¹⁷⁷ For Woolman, in contrast, prophetic self-identification, and an embodiment of a theologically-social alternative vision for world affairs, was a necessary part of the inward apocalypse he had experienced and that was already spreading in world affairs. As such, Woolman mentioned slavery in his writings more than Stanton,

¹⁷² Soderlund, *Divided Spirit*, 176-177.

¹⁷³ Stanton, 'Journal of Daniel Stanton,' 167.

¹⁷⁴ Fothergill, 'Memoirs of the Life of Samuel Fothergill,' 189.

¹⁷⁵ Churchman, 'Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of John Churchman,' 236.

¹⁷⁶ Soderlund, *Quakers and Slavery*, 45, 170-172, 176-178.

¹⁷⁷ See 3.2.

Fothergill, and Churchman combined, and described, in both political and spiritual terms, life under the government of Christ.¹⁷⁸

The most dedicated antislavery PYM leader among Woolman's peers was Anthony Benezet, who did not leave a journal, but who did leave many antislavery letters and tracts.¹⁷⁹ Woolman was influenced by Benezet, especially in his incorporation of travel narratives into his antislavery tracts.¹⁸⁰ Benezet, was, also, influenced by Woolman and quoted from him in his own antislavery tracts.¹⁸¹ Yet, despite their friendship and common cause, Woolman and Benezet are strikingly different in motivations and methods.¹⁸² Woolman and Benezet emphasized differing perspectives on the best means of antislavery discourse, and their work was motivated by complementary but distinct convictions of God's will. The theological difference between the two is apparent when examining Woolman's unpublished notes and commentary on Benezet's 1766 pamphlet, *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies*.¹⁸³ Central to Benezet's tract was a philosophical argument that juxtaposed stated British philosophical ideals of freedom and happiness, with the harsh reality of slavery.¹⁸⁴ Indeed, one of Benezet's greatest contributions to late-18th century

¹⁷⁸ See 2.2, 3.2 and chapter 4.

¹⁷⁹ See the collections in: Brendlinger, *To Be Silent...Would Be Criminal*; Brookes, *Friend Anthony Benezet*.

¹⁸⁰ See 1.7, and Jon R. Kershner, "To Meditate awhile on this Subject": John Woolman's (1720-1772) Reading of Anthony Benezet's (1713-1784) *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies* (presented at The Atlantic World of Anthony Benezet, 1713-1784, Paris, France, May 30-31, 2013).

¹⁸¹ See Anthony Benezet, *Observations on the Inslaving, Importing and Purchasing of Negroes*, 2nd ed. (Germantown, PA: 1760).

¹⁸² For example, Woolman never maintained the transatlantic antislavery correspondence that Benezet did. Brendlinger, *To Be Silent... Would Be Criminal*, chapter 4.

¹⁸³ See 1.5 c); Anthony Benezet, *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies in a Short Representation of the Calamitous State of the Enslaved Negroes in the British Dominions: Collected from Various Authors, and Submitted to the Serious Consideration of All, More Especially of Those in Power* (Philadelphia, PA: Printed by Henry Miller, in Second-Street., 1766).

¹⁸⁴ Benezet wrote:

Britons boast themselves to be a generous, humane people, who have a true sense of the

antislavery was his use of secular and philosophical sources.¹⁸⁵ However, in his notes and commentaries on Benezet's tract, Woolman adjusted Benezet's secular and philosophical arguments to suit his own understanding of the grounds of antislavery: whereas Benezet quoted Enlightenment thinkers to demonstrate, on secular grounds, that the African had, by nature, the right of self-determination and must freely offer consent to be governed,¹⁸⁶ Woolman adjusted the secular argument to make it a religious one. Woolman reflected that 'the nature of slave-keeping [was] like that of an absolute government where one man not perfect in wisdom and goodness gives laws to others.'¹⁸⁷ However, for Woolman the problem with 'absolute government' did not originate in republican ideals. Instead, human 'absolute government' was a 'snare' that usurped the role which belonged to God, 'to whom all men are equally accountable.'¹⁸⁸ In other words, God alone had authority to rule over humanity. When Woolman read Benezet, he did so in a way that supported his own deontology, in which slavery was wrong because it violated divine commands, and not because of any secondary philosophical concerns. Slavery, Woolman argued, was opposite to 'the pure undefiled religion of Jesus Christ in which oppression has no [place].'¹⁸⁹ Woolman read Benezet's essay in a way that reinforced his theological concerns for the transformation of society and the divine creation of a new social ethic that was revealed in the direct reign of Christ over human affairs, not the more compassionate and enlightened human governance Benezet

importance of Liberty; but is this a true character, whilst that barbarous, savage Slave-Trade, with all its attendant horrors, receives countenance and protection from the Legislature, whereby so many thousand lives are yearly sacrificed.

Benezet, *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain*, 32–33.

¹⁸⁵ Jackson, *Let This Voice Be Heard*, 32.

¹⁸⁶ Benezet, *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain*, 23–24.

¹⁸⁷ Woolman, 'Notes and commentaries on A. Benezet's *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain*', 99.

¹⁸⁸ Woolman, 'Notes and commentaries on A. Benezet's *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain*', 100.

¹⁸⁹ Woolman, 'Notes and commentaries on A. Benezet's *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain*', 101.

advocated. This point represents a significant difference between Benezet's and Woolman's antislavery and theology.

Woolman's notion of the government of Christ contained in it an 'eschatological deontology'¹⁹⁰ in that the revealed Christ, and the present and available kingdom of God, provided a this-worldly sphere for activity in keeping with divine dictates for societal organisation, such as those concerning slavery, now decisively revealed in the government of Christ. Thus, Woolman believed that faithfulness entailed un-wordly behaviour, within the world, according to the realising of God's eschatological purposes, while Benezet did not frame his antislavery within an eschatological paradigm.

5.2.3 Conversion

Woolman's conversion experience occurred within a colonial climate that viewed the progress of the soul from sinfulness, through abasement, to holiness and exaltation as a mandatory sequence of events in the spiritual life.¹⁹¹ Among Quaker reformers, there were no 'birth-right Friends,'¹⁹² each person must experience regeneration from

¹⁹⁰ Houtepen, 'Apocalyptic and the Kingdom of God,' 301.

¹⁹¹ Moorhead, 'Apocalypticism in Mainstream Protestantism,' 473.

¹⁹² 'Birth-right Friends' is a modern term to describe Quakers born into the religious community, and so not 'convinced,' or, converted. Fothergill wrote that a living experience of God was required for faithfulness, but many had regarded their faith as a 'patrimony.'

A noble see, of several classes respecting age, though too few of the aged amongst them, who have kept their garments clean, and whose hands are strong. Their fathers came into the country in its infancy, and bought large tracts of land for a trifles; their sons found large estates come into their possession, and a profession of religion which was partly national, which descended like the patrimony from their fathers, and cost as little. They settled in ease and affluence, and whilst they made the barren wilderness as a fruitful field, suffered the plantation of God to be as a field uncultivated, and a desert. Thus, decay of discipline and other wakening things prevailed, to the eclipsing of Zion's beauty; yet was there a noble remnant, whose love was strong, and who remembered the Lord of the whole earth and his house, whilst they built their own.

A people who had thus beat their swords into plough shares, with the bent of their spirit to this world, could not instruct their offspring in those statutes they had themselves forgotten. As every like begets its like, a generation was likely to succeed, formed upon other maxims, if the everlasting Father had not mercifully extended a

God. Woolman's conversion experience bore similarities to those of his Quaker peers, but Woolman claimed more from his conversion than they did. James Moorhead argues that evangelical Protestants experienced conversion as a 'miniature apocalypse,' in which assurance of salvation only arrived after a season of terror, in which they knew they deserved hell.¹⁹³ Churchman, for example, believed himself to be in a lost, 'evil' state, in need of salvation, but incapable of securing it on his own.¹⁹⁴ Fothergill, also, wrote of his own youthful sin as a lost spiritual state to be overcome, as Churchman and Woolman did.¹⁹⁵ Conversion was God's work, a 'visitation' from above, that revealed that path to happiness and salvation.¹⁹⁶

Churchman believed that every soul 'must die to the sin he hath committed, and witness a being raised by the power of God, into newness of life in Christ Jesus, not to live to himself, to fulfil the will of the flesh; but to live unto Him who died to take away sin.'¹⁹⁷ Unlike Woolman,¹⁹⁸ it was not until his deathbed that Churchman would claim perfection.¹⁹⁹ Fothergill pointed the Quaker faithful toward the 'miniature apocalypse'

visitation, to supply the deficiency of their natural parents.

It consisted with his wisdom and mercy to reach forth a hand of love to many of them of the younger sort, and to subject their hearts to the work of his own power; and more especially of later time, he hath prevailed upon many in that province; brought some into the ministry... he is building them up as a wall, upon which a palace of silver may be reared.

Fothergill, 'Memoirs of the Life of Samuel Fothergill,' 95.

¹⁹³ Moorhead, 'Apocalypticism in Mainstream Protestantism,' 473.

¹⁹⁴ Churchman, 'Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of John Churchman,' 177.

¹⁹⁵ Fothergill, 'Memoirs of the Life of Samuel Fothergill,' 95; cf. 2.2.1.

¹⁹⁶ Stanton, 'Journal of Daniel Stanton,' 146-147; Fothergill, 'Memoirs of the Life of Samuel Fothergill,' 128.

¹⁹⁷ Churchman, 'Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of John Churchman,' 178.

¹⁹⁸ See 4.2.

¹⁹⁹ Churchman's dying words indicate that at the moment of death and entrance into the next life he found perfection:

The door is open; I see an innumerable company of saints, of angels, and of the spirits of just men, and I long to be unbodied, to be with them, but not my will, but thy will be done, O Lord!... My sins are washed away by the blood of the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world... O that we may become more united in the church militant, and nearer resemble the church triumphant! O that we all might make such an end as I have in prospect, for it is all light, all life, all love and all peace.

when he challenged listeners to 'wait for and submit to the shaking, loosening power...

Follow faithfully to Bethel, to Jericho, through Jordan, and to the last vision of the heavenly messenger.²⁰⁰ However, for Fothergill, this conversionary sequence was the work of a life-time, and not accomplished definitively in this life.²⁰¹ Thus, he would confess that he was not in a state of complete obedience to God's will, and that he continued to be in an estranged state, and, so, God must

again and again turn his hand upon me, until he hath purged away all my dross, and made me what best pleases him... But the Lord, who has done wonderful things for my deliverance, has mercifully regarded and reached unto me, while in a state of open defiance to his tenderly striving spirit.²⁰²

Stanton described God's work in his life as a 'reformation' that must progress after conversion, 'to overcome the defilements of the world...'²⁰³ Stanton's use of 'reformation' differs from Woolman's because, for Stanton, the 'reformation' was God's necessary activity in his own life, whereas Woolman described the 'reformation' as God's fulfilling of divine purposes in the world.²⁰⁴

Churchman, Fothergill, and Stanton have in common a theology in which their pre-conversion state was one of enmity to God's will, but in conversion that enmity was overcome and the convert was brought to a spiritual state in which she was possible to please God. However, their post-conversion state did not hold that the power of sin had 'come to an end' in the believers life, as Woolman's did.²⁰⁵ The moment of justification was separate from that of sanctification, which might only occur in death. This theology

²⁰⁰ Churchman, 'Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of John Churchman,' 266.

²⁰¹ Fothergill, 'Memoirs of the Life of Samuel Fothergill,' 157.

²⁰² Fothergill, 'Memoirs of the Life of Samuel Fothergill,' 157.

²⁰³ Fothergill, 'Memoirs of the Life of Samuel Fothergill,' 98.

²⁰⁴ Stanton, 'Journal of Daniel Stanton,' 147.

²⁰⁵ See 4.1.2.

²⁰⁵ See 4.1.1 a).

supports Tousley's conclusions on the regeneration experiences of second-generation Quakers,²⁰⁶ and exposes Woolman's distinctiveness.

The conversion of Woolman's reform-minded peers re-enacted the this-worldly death and resurrection, that was a common experience among 18th century revivalists, and thus can also be viewed as an enactment of a 'miniature apocalypse'.²⁰⁷ However, the more modest claims of transformation and perfection made by Woolman's peers after conversion parallels the limited scope in which they can be considered apocalypticists. Woolman's theology of conversion was more intense, more transformative, and the end result was more comprehensive and complete.²⁰⁸ Thus, Woolman could claim that the pre-conversion self was not only justified, but also sanctified, and that the post-conversion self was capable of living on earth the eschatological life his peers could only look forward to.²⁰⁹ Because Woolman felt at conversion the power of Christ 'prevail,' and felt himself to be in a new relationship to the entire created order, experiences absent in the writings of his peers, Woolman's 'miniature apocalypse' can be better understood as a spiritualised apocalypse of the heart.²¹⁰ This experience is similar to that of 17th century Friends, in which the terrestrial life embodied life in the eschaton and enacted Christ's kingdom.²¹¹

²⁰⁶ Tousley argues that early Quakers experienced an overarching grace-event that linked justification, sanctification and the restoration of creation, but that second-generation Quakers lacked that experience. Thus, she argues, these later Friends were left with the expectation of victory over sin, but did not have a theology of justification and restoration capable of making it effectual. Tousley's research was not intended to speak to Woolman's generation, but it is significant to note that Woolman's theology diverges from the second generation's theology on this point. As his conversion narrative indicates, he experienced and articulated the victory of God over sin, such that he considered himself to be a new creation in the world, a confidence that led him to confront what he considered to be apostasy in the world around him. Tousley, 'Experience of Regeneration', 43. See also: 3.2.2.

²⁰⁷ Moorhead, 'Apocalypticism in Mainstream Protestantism,' 473.

²⁰⁸ See 4.2.

²⁰⁹ See 4.1.3 and 4.2.4.

²¹⁰ See chapter 4.

²¹¹ See 5.1 and chapter 4.

5.2.4 *Eschatology*

Damiano claims that 18th century Friends' believed Christ to be present with them, guiding them, so that the principles and realities of heaven touched down on earth through their faithfulness.²¹² This thesis has shown that Woolman's eschatology was more thoroughgoing, had a greater sense of God's direct involvement in world-affairs, and claimed more for the human agent who enacted divine commands.²¹³ None of Woolman's peers wrote with the same frequency on overtly eschatological matters, neither did they believe the eschaton to be present for the faithful on earth. However, the 18th century was ripe with eschatological ideas, and they did not escape these sentiments. Woolman's peers demonstrated the ability to oscillate between a default understanding that by listening to Christ's guidance in their lives they were bringing heaven to earth, and more ecstatic, revelatory moments that would have been typical for any colonial American of the 18th century.²¹⁴

The reformer's preaching was responded to by their co-religionists with a similar sense of eschatological urgency to that of non-Quaker revivalists. One anonymous Friend noted, after hearing Samuel Fothergill preach during his American stay, 1754-1756, that

such, indeed, was the force of divine evidence which attended him, that Friends' minds were seized with awful dread, and had to say to each other,

²¹² See 1.7.

²¹³ See 1.7 and chapter 4.

²¹⁴ It was an open question in the 18th century whether the millennium had already begun. Millennialism was the foundation on which the revivalism of the century was founded. Moreover, natural disasters were given eschatological meanings. Among religiously oriented citizens, eschatology made sense of events that were, otherwise, unexplainable. Mather Byles, *Divine Power and Anger Displayed in Earthquakes. A Sermon Occasioned by the Late Earthquake, in New-England, November 18, 1755. And Preached, the Next Lord's-Day, at Point-Shirley* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1755); Pestana, *Protestant Empire*, 196; Couser, *American Autobiography*, 27; Moorhead, 'Apocalypticism in Mainstream Protestantism,' 468.

after meeting, Is this the last warning that we are to receive? It seems so like that of Jeremiah to the Jews, just before the destruction of Jerusalem.²¹⁵

Quaker preachers, like Fothergill, brought their listeners to the point of repentance, lest they find themselves unready when they faced eternal judgment.²¹⁶ Churchman, too, was recorded in a sermon issuing warnings of imminent judgment and catastrophe for the wicked: '...a prospect immediately opened to my view of a day of calamity and sore distress which was approaching... Alas for the day! Alas for the day! Woe is me!'²¹⁷ Churchman said that an inward, perhaps angelic, voice told him that God would 'shake the heavens and the earth' and cause the 'stars to fall to the ground.'²¹⁸ Upon hearing this angelic message, Churchman exclaimed: 'O Lord Almighty, cut short thy work in the earth, in order that thou mayest put an end to sin and finish transgression, that thy fear, and the knowledge of thee, may cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.'²¹⁹ Quakers, like others in colonial America, resonated with messages that resolved the contradiction of apostasy in eschatological terms. It was not only a matter of proclaiming divine judgment, but the Last Judgment. Their messages, like that of the evangelical revivalists, confronted colonists with the tenuousness of their lives, and the uncertainty of history itself.²²⁰

²¹⁵ Anonymous, 'The Christian Orator on Hearing Samuel Fothergill Preach in Philadelphia,' Pemberton Papers 34: 30, quoted in Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 40.

²¹⁶ See also: Schmidt, *Hearing Things*, 60.

²¹⁷ Churchman, 'Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of John Churchman,' 244.

²¹⁸ It is significant that Churchman 'heard' a 'voice' proclaim this message of imminent catastrophe. Devout Christians of the 18th century discerned divine revelation through an inward 'hearing'. Gerona argues that dreams and visions gave Quakers the 'ability to fantasize collectively' and was a mode of communication that allowed the speaker to share things that would have been controversial. Churchman, 'Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of John Churchman,' 244; Gerona, *Night Journeys*, 3-4. Cf. Schmidt, *Hearing Things*, 46.

²¹⁹ Churchman, 'Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of John Churchman,' 244.

²²⁰ Apocalyptic themes were normative in the religious beliefs of devout colonists in the 18th century. Yet, none of these apocalyptic themes were identical to the apocalypticism of mid-17th century Quakerism. Nonetheless, many colonists believed their day was the propitious one, that old political and religious structures were being dismantled, and that the millennium would begin at any second

It was not only the preaching of reformers that caused Quakers to look to eschatological meanings, the events of their day seemed to fulfill biblical prophecies. After meeting with the Indian leader, Papunhank, in 1761, many of Woolman's reform-minded peers were prompted to interpret the event eschatologically: Israel Pemberton believed Papunhank's appearance pointed toward the 'fulfilling of the many glorious prophecies of the general spreading of the gospel... when the wilderness and the solitary places will be made to rejoice and become as the Garden of the Lord.'²²¹ Having written these sentiments down, Plank notes that Pemberton struck them out, perhaps because Pemberton thought his comments were 'excessively enthusiastic.'²²² Experiences like these are rare in the writings of Woolman's peers, and yet their existence at all complicates assessments of 18th century Quaker eschatology that diminishes the ability of individuals to maintain an eschatology centered on waiting and discernment, with one that could stray into more fevered pitches.²²³

Woolman and his 18th century peers agreed that Christ was present with them, and, so, available to their spiritual senses to guide the course of their lives and speak to them spiritually. However, Woolman's theology of the government of Christ, and the spread of the peaceable kingdom on earth, bore a greater degree of specificity than did

and a new Christianised world would be ushered in. Moorhead and Barnes have demonstrated that apocalyptic themes were prevalent in American Protestantism in the second half of the 18th century. Moorhead argues that Jonathan Edwards maintained a form of apocalyptic hope, in that he thought the millennium might have begun with the revivals of his day. Edwards later hedged these predictions, but, Moorhead argues, 'his initial enthusiasm represented a common pattern among evangelicals: revivals prompted expressions of hope that the millennial era was on the horizon.' Woolman's reform-minded peers were not left untouched by these sentiments. Moorhead, 'Apocalypticism in Mainstream Protestantism,' 468, 471; Barnes, 'Images of Hope and Despair,' 165-166. Cf. Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

²²¹ Israel Pemberton to Benjamin Hersey, and others, January 14, 1762, Friendly Association Minutes, 4:263 quoted in, Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 142-143.

²²² Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 143.

²²³ See 1.2.4 d) and 1.7.

the eschatology of his peers.²²⁴ In contrast, Churchman taught 'the doctrine and mysteries of the kingdom of Christ' in a way that suggests kingdom language to be an abstract concept for discerning moral precepts, a future eventuality beyond the realm of terrestrial experience.²²⁵ Elsewhere, Churchman related, 'I am fully confirmed in the belief, that that season will approach, which was foretold by the prophet, wherein the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea...'²²⁶ Churchman expected God to reign victorious, the eschaton was getting closer, but his was a futurist eschatology. Woolman's eschatology appears more prominently in his writings than Churchman's does, because, Woolman described the kingdom not as an *idea*, like Churchman did, but as a spiritual *state* that was already present in realising form.²²⁷

However, there was a diversity of eschatologies among the Quaker reformers, and Fothergill and Stanton were much closer to Woolman's views than Churchman did. Fothergill believed, in contrast to Churchman, that the kingdom of God was available on earth if the human will would conform to the divine will.²²⁸ Later, Fothergill would write of being united with the true Church in a spiritual state he called the 'leaven of the kingdom,'²²⁹ and beckoned others to attend to its 'establishment' with urgency and confidence because 'we are hastening fast through the scenes of time, and everlasting certainty is at hand.'²³⁰ Stanton proclaimed that the faithful experienced a new reality, a

²²⁴ See chapter 4.

²²⁵ Churchman, 'Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of John Churchman,' 258. See also, Fothergill, 'Memoirs of the Life of Samuel Fothergill,' 156.

²²⁶ Churchman, 'Gospel Labours and Christian Experiences of John Churchman,' 254.

²²⁷ See 2.2 and chapter 4.

²²⁸ Fothergill, 'Memoirs of the Life of Samuel Fothergill,' 215.

²²⁹ Fothergill, 'Memoirs of the Life of Samuel Fothergill,' 215.

²³⁰ The full quote reads:

May the great Lord of heaven and earth magnify his own name and arm. I believe He will do it, and that the day is near at hand, that he will work his wonderful work. Oh that our names may be written in his book, enrolled in his army... Dear friend, all other vision is a dream, and all labour fruitless or worse, that hath not some tendency to promote this

spiritual state that was 'new in his heavenly Father's kingdom,'²³¹ ideas that Woolman also expressed.²³² Churchman, Fothergill and Stanton illustrate that Woolman lived and worshipped in a culture replete with kingdom language, but the way that language was employed differed. Fothergill's and Stanton's theology implied a realising eschatology: the kingdom was present in the community of the faithful, and made claims upon one's life, but its full emergence was, as yet, imminent.²³³

While the diction changed, and the imagery was mundane in comparison, the contours of Fothergill's and Stanton's eschatology was consistent with the spiritualised eschatology espoused by Dewsbury, Howgill, or Fox, which Woolman, also, appropriated.²³⁴ The eschaton, they implied, was spiritually present, and accessible to the faithful; but, the reformers did not commit the 'category mistake' of the early Quakers, and, so, were a step removed from the vividness of the earlier experience. Eschatology was an important part of the reformer's theology, and denoted an expectation that God was actively at work in their world to bring all things to a resolution. However, because the reformers knew the kingdom as spiritual in content and spiritual in mode of revelation, like Woolman, they needed to discern the inward

establishment. We are hastening fast through the scenes of time, and everlasting certainty is at hand.

Fothergill, 'Memoirs of the Life of Samuel Fothergill,' 215.

²³¹ Stanton wrote:

[The faithful] sensibly partake of the new wine of the kingdom; they are like new bottles filled with new wine, and know him to drink and sup with them of this wine, new in his heavenly Father's kingdom. I take those to be new bottles that are created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, and that know the kingdom of our heavenly Father to be come, and his will to be done on earth as it is done in heaven. As we are taught to pray for this, it would be well for all mankind to come to the experience of it in themselves; for Christ our Lord said to some of old, "The kingdom of heaven is within you;" and the faithful have it in their experience to be the same now. It is a kingdom that consists of peace and joy, to the faithful subjects of his holy reign and government.

Stanton, 'Journal of Daniel Stanton,' 150.

²³² See 4.1.3.

²³³ Fothergill, 'Memoirs of the Life of Samuel Fothergill,' 215; Stanton, 'Journal of Daniel Stanton,' 148.

²³⁴ See 5.1.2.

teachings of the kingdom in order to identify the implications of the kingdom for the world in which they lived.²³⁵ Woolman, Stanton, and Fothergill perceived the eschaton to be nearer than many of the evangelicals of their day,²³⁶ and, here, are in the tradition of early Quakers; however, their mode of knowing the kingdom, as a spiritual event, looked closer to the millennialism of the revivalists than it did to the 'category mistake' of the early Quakers.²³⁷

Woolman employed eschatological language much more frequently than did Stanton, Churchman, or Fothergill. Moreover, even as Stanton and Fothergill appear to hold the idea of a realising eschatology like Woolman's, it is unclear whether or not they felt their eschatology had implications for societal organisation beyond the confines of Quakerism. The reformers held an implicit conviction that human behaviour influenced God's disposition toward humanity, and, therefore, considered their self-purity and reforms to be intercessory on behalf of their coreligionists.²³⁸ Yet, while reform minded Quakers believed their witness would influence world affairs for the better, they held that God was acting more indirectly than Woolman and early Friends believed. Thus, Fothergill would describe the 'miniature apocalypse' of conversion as a lifelong pursuit that was only effectual, in this life, for the faithful:

...[Who] being gathered up into the peace and rest of Mount Zion, may say to your children, and others, by a living example, "Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife."

...the ancient prophecy seems in measure accomplishing, "Thou

²³⁵ See 5.1.2.

²³⁶ Jonathan Edwards, for example, believed that the present age was spiritually deficient, and clearly demarcated from the eschaton. Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, 5, pp. 341-342, quoted in Amy Plantinga Pauw, 'The Supreme Harmony of All': *The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002), 175.

²³⁷ Moorhead, 'Apocalypticism in Mainstream Protestantism,' 472-474.

²³⁸ Bauman, *For the Reputation of Truth*, 53-55.

shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion, for the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come..."

...A gradual progress towards Zion, from tender years to such a state as the Almighty may allott [sic], is the most secure and uniform, is more free from the depths of distress and anguish, than where negligence and folly have attended their inconsiderate steps, and they have the sorrow of unlearning, and the labour of learning, in more advanced years.²³⁹

'Mount Zion', he believed, was both a present spiritual state for the faithful, and a state progressed toward gradually over the course of a lifetime; but, apparently, this journey was inconsequential to the broader scope of human affairs except in so far as the reformers modelled good behaviour for others.

5.2.5 Section Summary

The reformer's eschatology warned of future judgment, and provided encouragement to faithfulness. It brought with it apocalyptic themes, such as impending eschatological expectations and a sense of divine immediacy, but it was limited by the understanding that God worked indirectly to establish the kingdom. Moreover, since they could not claim the same comprehensive transformation to perfection that Woolman did, their hope for social transformation was, likewise, limited in scope and only tenuously related to any action on their part. Theirs was an apocalyptic eschatology, where the hope of redemption and vindication was present in the background, but could not be spoken or declared as a triumphant reality. The guidance of Christ, and the future security of Zion, were eschatological images that signified considerably moderated expectations for transformation than that of early Quakers. However, it was an eschatology, that, nonetheless, supported a hope that was neither presumptuous nor

²³⁹ Fothergill, 'Memoirs of the Life of Samuel Fothergill,' 172.

empty of affective power. For Woolman's reform-minded peers, Christ worked indirectly in the world, and His kingdom was one of 'patience,'²⁴⁰ not the 'spreading and prevailing' christocracy Woolman described.²⁴¹ Therefore, among his peers, Woolman stands out as an apocalyptic prophet whose vision of world transformation went beyond that of his friends. However, the difference was one of degrees, and Woolman would have found, in other reformers, encouragement for his views.

5.3 Woolman as a Systematic Theologian

This section analyses the extent to which Woolman can be described as a theological figure, what method of theology best characterises Woolman's apocalypticism, and the nature of his theological coherence. This thesis has demonstrated that Woolman's theology is best categorised as apocalyptic, and that a systematic study of his writings reveals the three core themes of apocalypticism: revelation, propheticism, and eschatology.²⁴² I contend that Woolman's was a constructive theology in the spiritualist tradition. By 'spiritualist tradition' I mean to describe that conception of religion that rejects traditional church organisation as inherently authoritative, and, that emphasises a) the immediate experience of divine revelation, b) a spiritualised eschatology, c) the necessity of a conversion experience resulting in a new birth, d) the inner authority of the Spirit over external sources of

²⁴⁰ Fothergill, 'Memoirs of the Life of Samuel Fothergill,' 126. Dewsberry also spoke of the 'Kingdom of Patience,' but he used the term to signify the perseverance required of the saints in their persecution as they awaited the outward eschatological vindication they had already experienced inwardly. Thus, the content and hope of the eschaton was already defined and firmly rooted in an experience that gave their 'patience' purpose. Fothergill, in contrast, called for patience to wait for an eschatological moment, the content of which he did not know. Quakers. Dewsberry, *Faithful Testimony of William Dewsberry*, 204.

²⁴¹ See 4.1.2 a).

²⁴² See 1.4 and 1.7.

authority, and e) the inward Spirit's remaking of social structures through the lives of the faithful.²⁴³ Spiritualism can include mysticism, but is expanded to encompass the broader field of pietistic and devotional religions of the heart.²⁴⁴

Systematic theology attempts to formulate a comprehensive and coherent conceptual statement of Christian claims concerning reality, God, and the relationships between them.²⁴⁵ While it is structured according to particular exercises and themes – each exercise explored within a single chapter – it attempts to demonstrate the cohesiveness of the system as a whole.²⁴⁶ While a systematic analysis of Woolman's writings reveals previously unacknowledged theological content,²⁴⁷ this thesis has argued above that Woolman should not be considered as a systematic theologian, or as attempting to describe a systematic theology.²⁴⁸ For example, Woolman's writings were devoid of reflections on theological doctrines of interest to systematic theologians. Woolman never discussed the doctrine of the Trinity, and he often co-mingled the functions of God the Father and Christ in the work of redemption and revelation in a way that demonstrates he had little concern for the nuances of Trinitarian theology.²⁴⁹ Woolman's theological omissions are instructive because they illustrate a theological perspective Woolman believed to be at the core of the life of faith. Namely, Woolman

²⁴³ Weeks, *Boehme*, 38

²⁴⁴ See Ted Campbell, *The Religion of the Heart: A Study of European Religious Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991).

²⁴⁵ John Webster, "Introduction: Systematic Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, eds. John Webster, Iain R Torrance, and Kathryn Tanner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com.proxy.earlham.edu.2048/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199245765.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199245765-e-1>.

²⁴⁶ The considerations that determine the shape of a particular systematic theology regard: a) judgments about sources, b) the inherited norms of the religious tradition, and c) the norms of the academic discipline. Webster. "Introduction: Systematic Theology."

²⁴⁷ See chapter 1.

²⁴⁸ See 4.1 and 4.1.1.

²⁴⁹ For example, at different times Woolman credits the presence of the Father and Christ for his redemption: see 4.2.1.

desired to point his readers to a transforming experience of divine revelation. He implied that faith was not a matter of the head – of proper conceptions of the Christian faith – but of the heart. This emphasis on the transformative power of divine revelation suggests that Woolman believed the revelation of Christ would teach the believer all things they needed to know regarding religion and societal organization.

Thus, Woolman constructed the theology that answered his concerns about the social events and religious anxieties of his day.²⁵⁰ He found in his apocalypticism a way of understanding imperialism and its effects, materialism, and the cultural shifts of his day.²⁵¹ Woolman claimed to speak God's word to society and warned his peers about being too much influenced by the wisdom of the world.²⁵² However, the selectivity of Woolman's theology presupposed a correlation between revelation and culture,²⁵³ which not only would result in successive generations of the faithful constructing a theology that spoke to the issues of their own day, but implied that culture set the agenda for theology in his own. Woolman would have vehemently opposed this assertion, because

²⁵⁰ See 1.2.4 and 3.2.

²⁵¹ See 1.2.4.

²⁵² Woolman wrote in an antislavery essay:

Customs generally approved and opinions received by youth from their superiors become like the natural produce of a soil, especially when they are suited to favourite inclinations. But as the judgments of God are without partiality, by which the state of the soul must be tried, it would be the highest wisdom to forego custom and popular opinions, and try the treasures of the soul by the infallible standard: Truth.

Woolman, 'Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes,' 198. See also: Woolman, 'Journal,' 58; cf. chapter 3.

²⁵³ This definition of 'correlation' takes for granted Paul Tillich's 'method of correlation'. Tillich asserted that human existential questions were addressed in the theological questioning of any given age. Human experiences of finitude prompts the search for a true 'ground of being' that transcends meaninglessness and finitude. This correlative understanding of the relationship between human longing and cultural dislocation posits a dynamic tension in the realm of religious experience that is helpful for understanding the tensions Woolman attempted to address through his theogico-social vision. See: David R. Law, 'Incarnation,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Theology and Modern European Thought*, eds. Nicholas Adams, George Pattison, and Graham Ward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com.proxy.earlham.edu:2048/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199601998.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199601998-e-29>.

he believed he was Christ's spokesperson, confronting the apostasy of his day.²⁵⁴ Yet Woolman's theology did not arise in a vacuum, but was a response to the events of the world around him. The selective and constructive nature of his theology, and its disregard for the larger Christian theological tradition, lacked the historical perspective to be independent of the daily concerns that confronted him and his community. Theology is never completely independent of its context, and any theology that has meaning addresses the pressing issues of its day, and, so, is always constructive.²⁵⁵ However, Woolman's apocalypticism, as with other theologies in the spiritualist tradition,²⁵⁶ was so dependent on reactions to the events of his day that he was unable to set forth a positive theological agenda for the mainstream of the British-Atlantic world.

Woolman's theology, then, only becomes identifiable in retrospect. That is, the constructive nature of Woolman's theology, in light of the progressive and correlative way he conceived it, developed according to cultural changes and his own spiritual breakthroughs, and, so, could only be described through an examination of his entire corpus from the posture of a later point in history. Woolman's theology was not finished, and would have continued to address the events of his day with the revelation he felt he had received. On one hand, the spiritualist and constructive nature of Woolman's theology makes him a difficult figure to examine with a theological lens, because he sought to witness to an experience that he thought went beyond what words could describe.²⁵⁷ On the other hand, he certainly thought his witness was indicative of *something* that others could know, emulate, and that was imminently practical to the

²⁵⁴ See 3.1.

²⁵⁵ William R. Barr, *Constructive Theology: Christian Theology in the Worldwide Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 2.

²⁵⁶ Campbell, *Religion of the Heart*, 2-3, 5.

²⁵⁷ See 2.1.1 c).

structure of religious and social life. In that respect, and from the perspective of history, his writings leave a record for analysis that purports a way of living and conceiving of the life of faith that is inherently theological, even if it lacks the disciplinary standards of systematic theology.

Moreover, Woolman's theological writings overcome the artificial boundaries and distinctions that comprise the structure of systematic theology. Even if systematic theology always has an eye toward the whole system,²⁵⁸ its delineated systematised structure contains demarcated chapters and exercises that work against the unitive function of theology. Woolman's theology resists such a structure, and is organised around three broad and overlapping themes (revelation, propheticism, realising eschatology). Woolman's affirmations of the work of Christ in his day were woven with assumptions about sin, conversion, eschatology, perfection, and justification. Those traditional doctrines of Christian faith that featured in Woolman's theology are so integrated as to only be discernible through a systematic analysis of his corpus and a thematic presentation of those theological assertions that demonstrate themselves to be important to his faith through repetition and reformulation over a sequence of years, and a variety of genres of literature.²⁵⁹ The unity of Woolman's theology – even if limited in scope to the elements that resonated with his tradition and personal concerns – demonstrates a complexity and coherence of thought that recommends further analyses of 'lay' and untrained religious figures.

The differences between Woolman and his Quaker forebearers and peers, and his selective adaptation of the Quaker tradition, demonstrates a good degree of theological

²⁵⁸ Webster, 'Introduction: Systematic Theology.'

²⁵⁹ See 1.5.

self-awareness and creativity.²⁶⁰ He wanted to teach others religious truths through the witness of his life and written arguments. However, the very fact that Woolman did not set out to teach orthodox ways of conceptualising God – not that he was *unorthodox*, but he was little concerned with orthodoxy – suggests that his primary concern was to draw people into a type of relationship in which God's will would become the dominant norm for human affairs. Implicit within his theology, and as a legacy of earlier Quakers and the spiritualist tradition, was a belief that God's direct leading was the only infallible guide for navigating the complexities of the late 18th century.²⁶¹ Thus, Woolman's theology was focused on advancing that claim, as seen in his this-worldly apocalypticism. In one respect, Woolman's approach seems to be a broad one that incorporated the religious experiences of Native Americans, Catholics, and other non-Quaker groups.²⁶² This inclusiveness was not predicated on the latitudinarianism common in colonial America,²⁶³ because he was not indifferent to the variety of religious traditions and practices of his fellow colonists and coreligionists, and, in fact, agitated against some of them.²⁶⁴ Rather, the universalism in Woolman's theology was based on his belief that God's will would be done on earth as it was in heaven, and that he knew what that will was, and could perfectly attend to it, and so could everyone else.²⁶⁵ However, this theological position can come across as overly optimistic and naïve. It implies, as other spiritualists and apocalypticists did,²⁶⁶ that the essential

²⁶⁰ See 5.1 and 5.2.

²⁶¹ See Appendix A for an example of how Woolman's theology led him to take specific courses of action.

²⁶² See 2.2.

²⁶³ Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven*, 7, 218-219.

²⁶⁴ See chapter 3.

²⁶⁵ See chapter 2.

²⁶⁶ Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Modernity, History, and Eschatology', in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry Walls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 493-494.

sources of theology were the ones found in the hermeneutics of the soul.

Without the disciplinary moorings, and historical perspective, of the theological tradition, Woolman's religious belief might come across as subjective; and, in his universal vision of Christ's governance over human affairs, one can detect an exclusivity that belies his optimism for global transformation, because it diminishes the ways, even mundane ones, that previous generations of Christians have embodied their religious convictions and the variety of theological sources they emphasised. Such criticisms of Woolman's theological perspective are legitimate, but elitist and overly favour modern, mainstream theological categories. Woolman's 'untrained' and 'lay' theology was limited to the same biases of culture and tradition that could be found in the most disciplined of systematic theologians. Therefore, evaluations of Woolman's theology, such as in this thesis, must be conducted with a disciplinary fluidity that presupposes the essentially constructive nature of all theological expression and, thus, its responsive relationship to a particular historical context. Conversely, theological method must respect the capacity of religious figures to think independently, to employ elements of their tradition, and to create original innovations upon that tradition in order to best navigate the pressing issues of the subject's era.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁷ Thus, Arthur Williamson warns of the reductionist consequences when modern scholars apply to 18th century figures anachronistic theological categories. Likewise, he contends that modern tendencies to bifurcate theological interpretations, and isolate them from the core of how historical figures interpreted their world, can diminish and delegitimise the means through which those figures found meaning:

Modern theology all too often has been projected onto the past, and has long promoted anachronism and drastic misconceptions as a result. The quest for denominational pedigree and doctrinal legitimacy has removed the complexities of previous generations and impoverished our understanding of the dynamics that drove earlier ages. The categories of pre- and postmillennialism provide an example. On the face of it these terms are quite clear and carry drastically conflicting implications: Christ will inaugurate the millennium (pre-), or Christ will turn up at the end of that prophesied period and draw it to a close (post-). Theoretically the latter should point to activism, the former to quietist "ready waiting." In practice, they have consistently proven highly unstable frameworks of distinctly limited usefulness. Even in recent centuries people often can

In light of this, the disciplines of systematic theology are not always the most fitting to examine the particularities of a theological system. Woolman did not give equal emphasis to the classical exercises within the Christian tradition, and so to approach him with the intent of discerning a systematic theology would be artificial and contrived, and it would miss the coherence of his theology as he described it. Therefore, scholars must pay attention to the theological method present in the subject of study.²⁶⁸ Academically untrained, spiritualist religious figures, like Woolman, should be approached in a way that allows their own emphases, and the heightened awareness of 'conscience' in religious expression, to form the shape of theological analysis.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Woolman's reading of early Quaker and devotional

slide from one to the other without significantly altering their outlook or expectations. Further, they comprise nineteenth-century terminology that earlier generations would have found puzzling or tangential to their concerns. Resort to such anachronism seriously distorts the world before 1800.

No less does apocalyptic thinking defy easy functional analyses. The apocalypse does not "stand" for something other than itself, but comprises an intellectual structure of great importance that needs to be understood within its own terms rather than made over into something more familiar. It simply will not do to see modern political movements as warmed-over Judeo-Christian messianism. Nor can apocalyptic preoccupations be dismissed as a piece of residual belief tucked away in the corner of otherwise significant minds. Isaac Newton's apocalyptic was by no means incidental to his most serious reflection. Similar distortion results from treating the apocalypse as a self-contained stream of thought, largely disconnected from the cultural environment of which it formed an integral part. Our understanding of this axial period will find itself ill-served by neat religious formulations, reassuring reduction, or casual dismissal.

Arthur Williamson, *Apocalypse Then: Prophecy & The Making of the Modern World* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2008), 3-4.

²⁶⁸ McGinn underlines the importance of this approach when he demonstrates that there was no single form of apocalypticism. Thus, predetermined categories and methodological rigidity can skew theological themes that historical figures deemed important to religion. Based on a historical analysis of a variety of apocalyptic themes, McGinn asserts:

...a tradition of apocalyptic spirituality that spans the centuries seem[s] to appear. Though we must remain ever conscious of the significant differences in substance and in nuance (attempts to isolate a single "apocalyptic mentality" usually appear too rigid), there still is good reason for speaking of apocalyptic spirituality as one of the important strands in the history of Christian striving toward God.

McGinn, 'Introduction: Apocalyptic Spirituality,' 7.

writers influenced his apocalypticism.²⁶⁹ In particular, Woolman found in his reading the belief that Christ was immediately available to the faithful, who would turn inward and listen to the divine voice.²⁷⁰ His reading, also, illustrated how the inward experience of Christ carried with it eschatological implications that framed events in the contemporary world with ultimate purpose and design.²⁷¹ These ultimate purposes included a conviction that God would vindicate the faithful and that the eschaton enabled perseverance in the midst of trial and persecution.²⁷²

Likewise, this chapter has demonstrated that while Woolman shared considerable commonality with his reform-minded Quaker peers, he stands out from them as maintaining a heightened degree of apocalyptic expectation.²⁷³ The theological areas of commonality he shared with his peers included a belief in the importance of conversion, and an awareness of impending eschatological judgment.²⁷⁴ However, he claimed to be transformed in ways that they did not, and his theogico-social vision was more universalised than their more sectarian concerns with their implicit belief in God's indirect involvement in world events through them.²⁷⁵

Moreover, this chapter argues that Woolman would not qualify as a systematic theologian, because he did not practice the disciplines of systematic theology. However, this chapter contends that Woolman was a constructive theologian in the spiritualist tradition that found helpful guidance in the Quaker tradition and his devotional reading, all of which identified the primary source of theological knowledge as the divine

²⁶⁹ See 5.1.

²⁷⁰ See 5.1.1.

²⁷¹ See 5.1.2.

²⁷² See 5.1.3.

²⁷³ See 5.2.

²⁷⁴ See 5.2.2 and 5.2.3.

²⁷⁵ See 5.2.3.

revelations in the human soul, which bore particular relevance to the affairs of his historical context.

CHAPTER SIX

THESIS CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary of Major Findings

Since his death in 1772, Woolman has been described by scholars as both the 'Quaker saint'¹ and 'eccentric'.² Much of the research on Woolman can be classified into two categories of literature: the first portrays Woolman hagiographically, as a meek and mild Quaker saint, who is often left disconnected from his controversial social vision.³ The other describes Woolman in a way that leads readers to consider him as an idiosyncratic humanitarian whose numerous social reforms resulted in an obsessive compulsive moralism.⁴

Approaching Woolman from a primarily historical and biographical perspective,⁵ much of the research to date has missed the coherence of thought and action that emerges from an analysis of the content of Woolman's religious beliefs. This thesis addresses a gap in Woolman research by approaching him in a way that takes the nuance of his theology seriously, treating him as an innovative theological thinker in his own right, while still enmeshed in his community and historical circumstances. Here, Woolman is presented as being much more complex than previous characterisations

¹ Edwin Harrison Cady, *John Woolman: The Mind of the Quaker Saint* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966); Plank, 'First Person in Antislavery Literature', 10.

² Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 264.

³ Sox, *John Woolman*; Mary Barnard, 'On the Death of Three Valiants in the Truth', in *Select Miscellanies: Chiefly Illustrative of the History, Christian Principles, and Sufferings, of the Society of Friends...*, ed. Wilson Armistead, vol. 4 (London: Charles Gilpin, 1851), 165-166; Birkel, *Near Sympathy*.

⁴ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul of John Woolman*.

⁵ The exception to this is Birkel's *Near Sympathy*, which is primarily devotional in its orientation.

have allowed for. From this micro-theology focus on Woolman as an individual with his own proclivities and way of interpreting his environment, one can see that Woolman's reforms were not disjunctive, but cohesive and united under his apocalyptic theology. Woolman is not best understood as a humanitarian or a saint, but as a self-styled prophetic figure,⁶ who identified himself as a harbinger of God's kingdom on earth, or, as he sometimes called it, 'the Government of Christ'.⁷

This thesis has identified the three major theological components of Woolman's apocalypticism: 1) revelation;⁸ 2) propheticism;⁹ and, 3) eschatology.¹⁰ These three components are interdependent, as Woolman's interpretation of the content of divine revelation subverted what he saw as the apostate prevailing ethic of colonial society.¹¹ As a result of supernatural revelation and the proximity of the eschaton, he believed that human behaviour must be transformed to reflect in the present the fullness of God's future consummation.¹² This theologically-social vision established God as the direct ruler of this world under 'the Government of Christ'.¹³ This theology was also prophetic because Woolman believed that humanity was called to partner with God in practical ways to establish the kingdom on earth in a way that was initiated through a divinely revealed prophetic commissioning.¹⁴

Woolman believed that a transcendent God broke into the physical realm to

⁶ See chapter 3.

⁷ See 4.1.

⁸ See chapter 2.

⁹ See chapter 3.

¹⁰ See chapter 4.

¹¹ See 2.1. See also, for example, the emergence of the transatlantic marketplace and Woolman's challenge to it in 1.2.4 a) and 3.2.

¹² See 4.1.

¹³ See 4.1.

¹⁴ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' See 2.2 and 3.1.

reveal specific truths about God's ultimate purposes¹⁵ and the fallen nature of the current worldly situation.¹⁶ Revelation occurred through 'otherworldly journeys'¹⁷ and the direct mediation of the Revealer.¹⁸ This revelation was both secret and universal. It was secret, in that it was only understood by the faithful, such as Woolman believed himself to be, but, once revealed, altered the understanding of reality for the faithful;¹⁹ but, it was universal, in that the revelation encompassed all of humanity and sought to address all of humanity through the 'divine principle'.²⁰ This altered understanding of the true nature of things placed Woolman in a tenuous temporal position,²¹ because he was at once in the world and, at the same time, his knowledge of God's ultimate purposes led him to believe he was already in the eschaton.²²

The divine reign had already begun, Woolman believed, and through human divine-partnership opposed the forces of apostasy.²³ Thus, this world was understood to be a primary theatre of God's activity, just as the Hebrew prophets believed.²⁴ While Woolman believed that God spoke through visions,²⁵ world events and natural catastrophes,²⁶ the reception of the revelation and original location of the apocalypse was the inward landscape of the soul where conversion happened.²⁷ Those who rejected the divine revelation would be subject to God's judgment,²⁸ because God was,

¹⁵ See chapter 2.

¹⁶ See 3.2.4. Collins, 'From Prophecy to Apocalypticism', 86.

¹⁷ Collins, 'Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre', 6. See also 2.1.2 and 5.2.

¹⁸ See 2.2.

¹⁹ See 2.1.

²⁰ See chapter 2.

²¹ This is what Bromley called 'temporal liminality'. Bromley, 'Constructing Apocalypticism', 33; see 4.1.1.

²² See 4.1.

²³ See 3.2.4, 4.1 and 4.3.

²⁴ Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 198–199. See 3.1, 4.1 and 4.2.

²⁵ See 2.1.2.

²⁶ See 4.3.

²⁷ See 2.2.1.

²⁸ See 3.2.4 and 4.3.

ultimately, just and would rise up to action on behalf of the oppressed.²⁹ In fact, Woolman believed spiritual rebellion and the corruption of 18th century society represented an 'eschatological upheaval' with consequences that went well beyond what many of his contemporaries understood.³⁰ Thus, submission to God's will on earth and obedience to the divine revelation were imperative and led Woolman to particular social criticisms, which appeared to many of his contemporaries as 'singular,' but, in his view, were necessary, if he was to remain obedient to God's revelation.³¹ However, unlike some non-prophetic apocalyptic groups, Woolman did not merely wait for God to intervene in a completely supernatural way at a future time, he believed he was commissioned to warn his fellow citizens of the urgency of the situation and participate in the spread of the kingdom as God's messenger.³² Much of Woolman's reading resonated with the spiritual nature of his theology, but Woolman appropriated it in an original way, which, also, explains why Woolman's apocalypticism was distinctive among his 18th century peers.³³ Therefore, this thesis demonstrates that analysing Woolman in terms of apocalyptic theology makes sense of his diverse social reforms, takes seriously his claims of Christ's immediacy and governance of world events and is essential to a coherent understanding of his constructive theology³⁴.

6.2 Original Contribution

Existing Woolman scholarship has not identified the centrality of revelation,

²⁹ See 4.3.

³⁰ See chapters 3 and 4.

³¹ See 3.1.

³² For a description of non-prophetic apocalyptic, see Ladd, 'Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?' 196–198. See also, 3.1 for Woolman's prophetic commissioning.

³³ See 5.1 and 5.2.

³⁴ See 5.3.

propheticism and eschatology in Woolman's thought, and likewise, has not explored the apocalypticism those themes constitute. One reason Woolman has not been interpreted in this light is because scholars have over-emphasised the role of Robert Barclay – who did not articulate an overt eschatology in his influential *Apology*³⁵ – in defining Quaker theology in the 18th century.³⁶ To over-assert the point that Woolman followed Barclay's theology diminishes the unique and individualised appropriation of religious belief according to the variety of perspectives humans use to form opinions, and puts too much emphasis on Barclay's influence in creating an atmosphere of theological conformity in succeeding generations. I do not mean by this that 18th century Quaker colonists originated a theology without at least the unconscious influence of religious tradition and cultural assumptions, but that individuals maintained varying degrees of intellectual and spiritual self-determination. Woolman faced a different set of cultural and intellectual forces than Barclay had in late 17th century Britain. Likewise, Barclay articulated Quaker faith in a way that resonated with his own convictions, but that was different from the first generation in the mid-17th century.³⁷ Woolman must be understood as a unique figure capable of interpreting his faith according to his perception of the needs of the 18th century.³⁸

³⁵ Barclay, *Apology*.

³⁶ Dandelion, *Liturgies of Quakerism*, 51.

³⁷ For example, Gwyn has identified, in Penn's efforts to advance religious toleration on behalf of Quakers, a 'privatized eschatology', which diminished the apocalyptic aspects of the Quaker founders' preaching 'except for its benign effects upon the citizenry.' Likewise, Dandelion has demonstrated that 'Barclay and the Quakers who followed him de-coupled a sense of endtime and a sense of intimacy [with Christ's presence].' These analyses suggest that Penn and Barclay reduced the early Quaker emphasis on eschatological transformation of the created order, and, thus, changed a key component of early Quaker apocalyptic theology. Woolman was familiar with the writings of both Penn and Barclay, but just as Penn and Barclay adjusted Quaker theology according to their understanding of the conditions of the late 17th century. Gwyn, *Covenant Crucified*, 327, 331; Dandelion, *Liturgies of Quakerism*, 51; Woolman, 'Ledger B.'

³⁸ Calvert has demonstrated that other 18th century Quakers maintained a missionising emphasis 'only a few degrees milder than the language of the Lamb's War and the sentiment is the same – there should be a sustained and vigorous effort to assure that the cause of Truth is promulgated.' While Calvert

Perhaps another reason that Woolman's apocalypticism is not as widely recognised, is because it originated inwardly, in the apocalypse of the heart through revelation³⁹ and conversion⁴⁰ which then became a fully universalising theologically-social vision⁴¹ with this-worldly eschatological expectations.⁴² Gwyn's work on the apocalypticism of early Friends helpfully illustrates the way 'a fully apocalyptic vision' could fuse an inward conversion 'with an aggressive challenge to society'⁴³ like Woolman's a century later.⁴⁴ 'The apocalyptic spirituality of early Friends', Gwyn argues, 'anticipated the reign of God on earth in two ways: it contained a sense of imminent social transformation and it began to implement that transformation in concrete, experimental ways.'⁴⁵

This thesis demonstrates that Woolman believed his amillennial eschatology and perfectionism placed him in a transformed state, which reorientated human behaviour.⁴⁶ This idea makes an original contribution to 18th century Quaker scholarship and is evocative of further fields of inquiry between Woolman and early Friends.⁴⁷ At a time when Woolman thought a fallen economic system had alienated people from a right relationship with God and actively opposed God's purposes, he claimed that, through

acknowledges a change in tone between the first generation of Quakers and that of the 18th century, she contends that the overarching theological visions were similar. Moreover, Marietta contends that the reformers of the mid-18th century bear a striking resemblance to the evangelists of the first generation of Quakers. Additional theological analyses of 18th century Quakers is needed to determine the extent that Calvert's thesis and mine can be applied to other Quaker figures. Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism*, 53–54; Marietta, *Reformation of American Quakerism*, 76–77.

³⁹ See 2.2.

⁴⁰ See 2.2.1.

⁴¹ See 2.2.

⁴² See 4.1.

⁴³ Gwyn, *Covenant Crucified*, 105.

⁴⁴ See chapter 3 and 4.1.

⁴⁵ Gwyn, *Covenant Crucified*, 105.

⁴⁶ See 4.1 and 4.2.

⁴⁷ See 5.1.

'resignation' to God's governance,⁴⁸ individuals could literally act as citizens of God's kingdom and transcend the corruptions of an economic system which seemed pervasive and inescapable.⁴⁹ Thus, Woolman's theology is helpfully and best understood as apocalyptic, because it was directed towards the social and economic issues of his day, to the societal ordering within which he found himself.

6.3 Implications

6.3.1 Previous Scholarship

Dandelion's analysis of 18th century Quietism⁵⁰ gives appropriate attention to the level of social engagement required as Friends worked and ministered in the world, moving in and out of the secular world while attempting to maintain a continual connection to the supernatural. However, this interpretation of an 18th century Quaker dualism between sacred (i.e. Quaker) and secular (i.e. non-Quaker)⁵¹ minimises Woolman's evangelistic conviction that both Quakers and non-Quakers needed to come under the government of Christ.⁵² Thus, if Woolman did demonstrate a dualism, it was between those governed by Christ and those not under Christ's government, whether they were Quakers or not. Hence, the unconverted were both within and without Quaker

⁴⁸ Gwyn demonstrates that early Quakers believed that the centre of God's transformation of the individual was 'the daily cross'. The cross was a controlling power, new to the spiritual experience of early Friends. It entailed the destruction of the alienated self with God's power and the reconstruction of self in the power of Christ, liberated to live and act fully in this world as an agent and harbinger of the eschatological transformation for which the whole world was destined. Woolman used 'cross' language throughout his writings in regard to many of his primary theological themes explained in this thesis, but 'the cross' was often related to 'resignation' in that it always entailed the relinquishment of the false-self and the liberation of the true-self in God. See 2.1.1; Gwyn, *Covenant Crucified*, 135; Woolman, *Journal*, 84, 100, 101, 165.

⁴⁹ See 4.1 and 4.2.

⁵⁰ See 1.2.4 d).

⁵¹ See 1.2.4 d).

⁵² See 4.1.2.

circles and increased attention to discipline was intended to point people's minds to the divine revelation which was understood by Woolman as the only basis for faithfulness.⁵³

The diversity of positions on the nature of 18th century Quietism is indicative of the complexity of the era.⁵⁴ Jones and Dandelion argue that a shift in theology between the first Quakers and the second generation resulted in a loss of intimacy with God and so a more cloistered engagement with the world. Others, such as Damiano and Spencer, acknowledge the quietist culture of the 18th century, but argue for an overarching theological continuity with early Friends, and contend that Quietists demonstrated an active and intimate relationship with God and a powerful calling to public social witness.⁵⁵ This thesis has demonstrated that Woolman's apocalyptic theology was comprised of an intimate and inward reception of divine revelation which, then, made claims on society and directed the world towards its divinely ordained destiny, all the while using human agents, who were commissioned to proclaim the theogico-social vision which was the content of divine revelation. As this thesis identifies, Woolman's theology is best understood as apocalyptic. That this is the case in the middle of the 18th century suggests that previous scholarship has gone too far in arguing that such a theology among Quakers disappeared after the first generation in the 17th century. Moreover, previous attempts to categorise Woolman as predominantly quietist do not give enough attention to his eschatology and experience of divine commissioning. This thesis, then, suggests that fresh research is needed to discern the extent to which Quietism affected 18th century Quakers, and, especially, the limits of using such categories over such a diverse period.

⁵³ See 3.2.

⁵⁴ See 1.2.4 d).

⁵⁵ Damiano, 'On Earth as it is in Heaven', 59; Spencer, *Holiness*, 93, 96-97.

6.3.2 Future Research

While the apocalyptic theology delineated in this thesis sheds light on Woolman, more research needs to be done to situate Woolman theologically among his 18th century peers. Two theologians who would make fruitful comparisons are Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) and John Wesley (1703-1791). For example, Woolman's amillennialism is historically significant in light of the growth of postmillennialism in many sectors of colonial society during his lifetime,⁵⁶ though there is insufficient research to speculate on postmillennial belief among Quakers. Weber contends that, as a result of the revivals of the 18th century, colonial religion transitioned from premillennial theologies to postmillennialism.⁵⁷ Because of the revivals of the so-called 'Great Awakening', beginning in the 1730s, in which thousands were converted and many new churches were formed, religious leaders like Edwards believed the first-fruits of the millennium had begun and God would use the saints to establish the kingdom on earth through revivalism and social reform.⁵⁸

However, at the core of Edwards eschatology was the inference that, prior to the millennium, the Holy Spirit had been given 'but very sparingly'.⁵⁹ In the millennium, the gift of the Spirit would be experienced on earth and love would be preeminent:

And then shall all the world be united in peace and love in one amiable society; all nations, in all parts, on every side of the globe, shall then be knit together in sweet harmony, all parts of God's church assisting and

⁵⁶ Timothy Weber, 'Millennialism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry Walls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 376.

⁵⁷ Weber, 'Millennialism', 376.

⁵⁸ Weber, 'Millennialism', 376.

⁵⁹ Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, 5, pp. 341-342, quoted in Amy Plantinga Pauw, 'The Supreme Harmony of All': *The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2002), 175.

promoting the knowledge and spiritual good one of another...all the world [shall then be] as one church, one orderly, regular, beautiful society, one body, all the members in beautiful proportion.⁶⁰

In Edwards' eschatology, the period of time before the millennium, though promising, was spiritually limited.⁶¹ Only at a future time would God's presence be fully experienced.⁶² That future time was clearly demarcated from the present day and no one from the present had entered the millennium.⁶³ Only after the millennium had concluded would Christ return in judgment.⁶⁴ While the location of the millennium would be on earth, the millennium itself was a prerequisite for the final fulfillment in heaven in which the saints would experience complete and perfect union with God, free from the threat of backsliding.⁶⁵ Thus, in this view, the millennium was, as Puritan John Cotton (1585-1652) put it, a 'middle advent' between the world as it was and the future fullness of the eschaton.⁶⁶ Edward's postmillennialism represents a significant eschatological viewpoint in the 18th century, but not the only one. Edward's postmillennialism contrasts with Woolman's this-worldly amillennialism in which all conditions were met for the fullness of eschatological fulfillment, and, indeed, some had already entered that experience.⁶⁷ Further study could helpfully situate divergent eschatologies and individual theological formulations within the wider colonial context.

In a study of Wesley's theology of perfection, Olson argues that any study of perfection must deal with what sin is, and how much of it can be eradicated in this life.⁶⁸

⁶⁰ Jonathan Edwards, *Works*, 9, pp. 483-484, quoted in Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony of All*, 175.

⁶¹ Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony of All*, 175.

⁶² Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony of All*, 175.

⁶³ Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony of All*, 175.

⁶⁴ Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony of All*, 175.

⁶⁵ Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony of All*, 176.

⁶⁶ Smolinski, *The Kingdom, the Power, & the Glory*, xvi-xix.

⁶⁷ See 4.1.

⁶⁸ Olson, *John Wesley's Theology of Christian Perfection*, 216.

The difference between Woolman's perfectionism and Wesley's was that Woolman's perfectionism was wrapped up in an apocalyptic theology in which the divine will broke into human affairs and transformed the world, Wesley's did not make such claims. Lisa Powell has demonstrated the confluence of Wesleyan eschatology and sanctification; however, Wesley did not claim to be in the 'habitation' of God as Woolman did, nor did Wesley envision himself to have taken on a resurrected self on earth.⁶⁹ Woolman's apocalyptic experiences placed a greater expectation for the complete eradication of apostasy during his lifetime which coincided with the eschatological new nature he believed himself to have already experienced.⁷⁰

Wesley's perfectionism, though, did hold together spiritual and ethical aspects of his faith. He believed that a Christian was 'one who believes in Christ, as that sin has no more dominion over him.'⁷¹ With his Aldersgate conversion experience on May 24, 1738, he became a Christian, 'for till then sin had the dominion over me, although I fought with it continually; but surely then, from that time to this, it hath not.'⁷² However, Peters notes that, by 1745, Wesley had arrived at a doctrine of 'degrees' of faith.⁷³ Wesley wrote: 'We allow there may be infinite degrees in seeing God; even as many as there are between him who sees the sun when it shines on his eyelids closed, and him who stands with his eyes wide open in the full blaze of its beams.'⁷⁴ Due to his belief in degrees of conversion, Wesley later suggested that the Aldersgate experience

⁶⁹ See 4.1; Lisa Powell, 'Eschatology and Sanctification' (presented at the American Academy of Religion, San Francisco, 2011), 1-17.

⁷⁰ See 4.1.3.

⁷¹ John Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, vol. X (New York: J & J Harper, 1827), 461.

⁷² Wesley, *Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, vol. X, 461.

⁷³ John Leland Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), 25.

⁷⁴ John Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, vol. VIII (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872), 282.

was not sufficient in itself, but that there was more growth ahead.⁷⁵ Peters argues that Wesley had to address some confusion that arose from the original distinction between sanctification – the long process whereby the Christian was brought into holiness – and *entire* sanctification.⁷⁶ In the popular mind, the former was often used when the latter was intended.⁷⁷ As a result, some believed that a person achieved perfection at the moment of justification, which Wesley rejected, because it implied that there would be no progress after the original conversion.⁷⁸ However, for Wesley, sanctification was a process for this life, and so he believed Christian perfection to be a limited perfection.⁷⁹ People could still err and human ignorance remained, but the perfection available was not limited in a way that pertained to salvation.⁸⁰

Olson describes Wesley's view of the gradual process and instantaneous moment as one in which the Christian grew toward perfection, entered into it instantaneously, and continued to grow in it afterwards. It was a 'second gift' received now by faith.⁸¹ Woolman, on the other hand, was not worried about any perceived inconsistency concerning the gradual or instantaneous way perfection came upon a person, as Wesley was.⁸² Rather, Woolman was comfortable describing both sides of the dialectic, both

⁷⁵ Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism*, 27.

⁷⁶ Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism*, 34.

⁷⁷ Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism*, 34.

⁷⁸ Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism*, 34-35.

⁷⁹ Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism*, 34-35.

⁸⁰ Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism*, 36.

⁸¹ Olson argues:

Christian perfection is a state we grow towards, enter into instantaneously, and continue to grow in afterwards, even into all eternity. Therefore, just as justification and new birth are gifts from God, perfection is the *second gift* to be received *now* by faith...This entire process involves a soteriological tension in our lives. To his credit, Wesley was consistent when he taught we must hold together both the gradual and the instantaneous motifs of spiritual development, without diminishing the importance of either.

Olson, *John Wesley's Theology of Christian Perfection*, 323.

⁸² See 4.2.

purification⁸³ and transformation,⁸⁴ in a way that seemed contradictory because each step of purification entailed a transformation and each new transformation opened up further doors for purification.

Wesley emphasised perfection as the capacity for Christians to no longer be dominated by sin, but to be able to act faithfully according to the example of Christ.⁸⁵ He wrote that the Christian goal was

that habitual disposition of soul, which in the sacred writings is termed holiness, and which directly implies the being cleansed from sin...and, by consequence, the being endued with those virtues which were also in Christ Jesus; the being so "renewed in the spirit of our mind," as to be "perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect."⁸⁶

'New-born Christians are perfect in the sense of being free from the necessity of committing any outward sin', Maddox explains, 'while only mature Christians are perfect in the further sense of being free from evil thoughts and tempers.'⁸⁷ Maddox argues that Wesley's doctrine, in which the new birth of justification freed the person from the necessity of sin and that Christian Perfection provided further deliverance from all forms of inward sin, characterised Wesley's theology in the 1740s and 1750s.⁸⁸ Towards the end of the 1750s, Maddox contends, Wesley began to teach that perfection might not wait until the last minute, but could be attained more quickly, if the person were to seek it diligently.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, even Christian Perfection itself was improvable because faith could never be static, if it were to survive.⁹⁰

⁸³ See Appendix C.

⁸⁴ See 4.2.4

⁸⁵ John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (London: The Epworth Press, 1997), 7.

⁸⁶ Wesley, *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 7.

⁸⁷ Randy L Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994), 181.

⁸⁸ Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 182.

⁸⁹ Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 182.

⁹⁰ Peters, *Christian Perfection and American Methodism*, 50–51.

However, liberation theologian Bonino argues that, in Wesley's obsession with the process in which Christian Perfection was attained, he became mired in a 'rigid sequence' of events in his *ordo salutis*, which effectively created a doctrine of 'double justification' that obscured the decisiveness of divine grace.⁹¹ Woolman escapes this criticism because he did not define an *ordo salutis*. As this thesis demonstrates, the one step of 'resignation' to the divine revelation was fully salvific and transformational. Since the apocalypse was God's activity, Woolman believed that integration under God's government was inherent in what it meant to be part of the true Church.

Thus, Woolman's conviction that he could not only be free *from* sin, but also actively embody the characteristics of Christ outwardly,⁹² is similar to Wesley, who understood Christian perfection to be not only freedom from the necessity of sin, but to be being 'endued with those virtues which were also in Christ Jesus'.⁹³ However, Wesley's perfectionism did not emphasise the direct, ongoing leadership of God – which, for Woolman, would be articulated in terms of a state within the government of Christ – but rather the adoption of certain 'virtues'.⁹⁴ The difference is one of a moral performance in Wesley and a transformed state in Woolman. These differences are

⁹¹ Bonino explains, in full:

Having left justification behind as a "moment," it was inevitable that he would fall into the trap of double justification - making a distinction between a "provisional" and a "final" salvation - thus endangering the very heart of faith. Justification, and even sanctification, in such a view becomes a series of almost disconnected moments, always precarious and threatened by sin. Both the unity of the human subject and the faithfulness and unity of God's grace are obscured and distorted. Wesley's formulation of sanctification and perfection becomes in this way psychologically untenable for us. Spiritually, it opens the way for either an unhealthful scrupulosity or an equally harmful petulance. That Wesley himself did not seem to fall into either simply proves that his spiritual life - as in the case of many other saints - was much better than his theology.

Bonino, 'Wesley's Doctrine of Sanctification From a Liberationist Perspective', 56.

⁹² See 4.2.3.

⁹³ John Wesley, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, ed. Edward H Sugden (London: The Epworth Press, 1955), 267–268.

⁹⁴ Wesley, *Wesley's Standard Sermons*, 267–268.

suggestive of the diversity of ways in which theological perfectionism was conceived in the 18th century and the way theological considerations influenced the way people engaged with their environment.

Additionally, Woolman's self-identification as a prophetic figure resulted in tensions between his interpretation of God's will and the shortcomings he identified in colonial society and his own religious community.⁹⁵ This tension is not unlike that of other colonial dissenting voices who interpreted their place in the community as one of social contradiction. In this way, an analysis of Woolman's prophetic self-identification helps scholars understand other Quaker reformers and reform movements within other colonial religious communities.

How did colonial 'prophets' wrestle with the conviction of spiritual truth and the perception of religious compromise? Woolman demonstrated that the community's particular theology and values could play an important role in both the repression of dissenting voices and the expression of alternative visions for the community's future, but other theological frameworks could provide fruitful comparisons. For example, the New England Puritans were driven by an understanding, as Sacvan Bercovitch argues, 'of themselves as a chosen people under a covenant that was at once provisional and absolute, temporal and sacred.'⁹⁶ Their jeremiads reflected these millennial expectations

⁹⁵ See chapter 3.

⁹⁶ Bercovitch argues that Puritans thought God's covenant with them was provisional, in that their election would be manifest through particular actions that demonstrated faithfulness. For this reason, Puritan preachers were quick to condemn backsliding among the faithful in a sermon form known as a 'jeremiad'. However, the articulation of the provisional covenant in the jeremiad served to reaffirm God's absolute decision to bless the elect in a way that paralleled the relationship between the Hebrew prophets and the nation of Israel. Bercovitch argues that:

if the figural parallel with Israel shaped the Puritan concept of errand, the doctrine of National Conversion certified the errand's progress. It served not only to validate the Halfway Covenant, but through that validation to explain away the dangers of declension once and for all. Even as they defended God's untoward judgments, the clergy maintained that God was about to pour His blessings upon the backsliding children, just as He would

of themselves as an elect people. For the Puritans, socio-religious criticism, dissent and prophetic identification reinforced the absolute decree of God's covenant and heightened communal faithfulness to that decree to a degree that made it fact to them.⁹⁷ The probation and wrath articulated in the Puritan jeremiad undergirded their confidence.⁹⁸ As Bercovitch argues, 'the prospect of ultimate triumph in these sermons is embedded in the very terms of trial.'⁹⁹ Comparing Woolman with these colonial voices would increase understanding of the way theology and tradition shaped religious life and social expectations.

6.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have identified the major findings of this thesis; that is, that a theological approach to Woolman's writings illuminates an apocalyptic theology which consists of three elements: revelation, propheticism and eschatology. I have also shown that, 1) Woolman's reading contained spiritual sources for his theology, but that he appropriated these influences in his own way; 2) that Woolman found common cause with his peers, but was theologically distinct; and, 3) that his theology was not systematic, but a constructive theology in the spiritualist tradition. These findings constitute an original contribution to Woolman studies, which has not previously viewed him primarily through a theological lens and so has not explored his apocalypticism.

upon the house of Israel...Accordingly, it was no longer only a question of trial. Primarily, it was a matter of patience and faith. This total identification – literal, spiritual, and figural – of Old Israel and New is a distinguishing trait of the jeremiads in the last decades of the seventeenth century.

Through the doctrine of 'National Conversion', the spiritual connection between God and God's chosen, the 'New' Israel, became a political, temporal and geographic reality. Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, 33, 48-49, 76.

⁹⁷ Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, 48-49.

⁹⁸ Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, 56.

⁹⁹ Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, 56.

Additionally, the theological lens applied here demonstrates the continuing theological influence of early Quakers on mid-18th century Quakers, and the theological diversity present among reform-minded Quakers. Moreover, these findings, in Woolman's writings, call into question previous scholarship on 18th century Quakers and suggest that it is time to reconsider previous labels, such as Quietism. Since this thesis demonstrates the importance of a theological approach to Woolman, it would also be helpful to consider him in the context of the theological discussions of his day, especially those outside Quakerism.

APPENDIX A

'RESIGNATION' EXAMPLE: WOOLMAN'S DECISION NOT TO SAIL TO BARBADOS

One particular narrative in Woolman's *Journal* and in PYM records: 1) outlines Woolman's discernment about whether to sail to Barbados in 1769-1770; 2) indicates the state of 'resignation' and attention to divine revelation he believed was God's will; and, 3) illustrates the process which Woolman felt transformed and redeemed his earthly endeavours. On the surface, Woolman's wrestling with the prospect of sailing to Barbados would appear to be a prime example of the self-annihilating, world-escaping Quietism Jones and Dandelion¹ have attributed to 18th century Quakers. However, a closer look shows that this decision demonstrates Woolman's belief that divine revelation pointed to an alternative theogico-social ordering and would direct and redeem human action, defeat the influence of sin and provide a path for perfect embodiment of the transformed self in this life.²

Woolman's initial consideration of the trip to Barbados was motivated by his remorse for having executed the will 'of a deceased Friend', which entailed the sale of a 'Negro lad' as a slave to a new master until the young man reached the age of thirty.³ Woolman did not reveal the identity of this young man in his *Journal*, where he recorded the event, but left a clue elsewhere; in a 1769 entry in the upper margin of his Ledger, Woolman wrote, 'Negro James bound 2 da: 1 mo: 1754 to Serve 21 years that is

¹ Jones, 'Quietism', 3; Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity', 106-107.

² cf. 1.4.

³ Woolman, 'Journal', 152.

till 2 da: 1 mo: 1775.⁴ 'Negro James' was almost certainly the 'Negro lad' to whom Woolman referred in his *Journal* since his ages and dates from the Ledger line up perfectly with the account in the *Journal*.⁵ Woolman executed the will as a young man but, as recorded in a June 11, 1769 entry in his *Journal*, the event became particularly 'grievous to me'.⁶ At the time, the 'lad' was twenty-four years old and a frequent attendee of Woolman's meeting.⁷ Woolman recounted sitting in meeting and seeing James, whom he had maintained in slavery 'nine years longer than is common for our own children to serve', and felt the inconsistency of this with the revelation of 'that awful Being who respecteth not person nor colours'.⁸ Since Woolman was one of two people who executed the will, he put up a bond to pay for the second-half of the extra nine years, so that James might gain his freedom before his thirtieth birthday.⁹ However, Woolman felt further 'restitution' was necessary and so 'was under some concern that I may be resigned to go on a visit to some part of the West Indies, and was under close engagement of spirit...'¹⁰

⁴ Woolman, 'John Woolman's 1769 Ledger'. For a detailed account of Woolman's involvement in the case of 'Negro James', see Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 102.

⁵ Plank notes that Jem, or James as Woolman called him, was originally held by a friend of the Woolman family, Thomas Shinn. Shinn's story illustrates how complicated emancipation could be. Shinn had six slaves, a man named Tabby and his wife and four younger persons, who might have been Tabby's children: Hannah, Jade, Pleasant and Jem. In his will, Shinn directed that Tabby and his wife should be freed immediately upon his death, but he did not make such provisions for the children. New Jersey law stipulated that, if someone were to free a slave, they must also post a bond to support that person should the former slave fall on economic hardship. The law was intended to discourage freed slaves from falling on poor relief. Shinn did not wish to place the responsibility for coming up with the bond money on his heirs and so sold Hannah for a fixed term to come up with some of the bond money for Tabby and his wife. Shinn compensated his daughters for the risk they were assuming for freeing Tabby and his wife by giving Jade and Pleasant to them and stipulated that they were to be freed at the age of thirty. Shinn retained Jem, but directed the executors – Woolman being one – to sell Jem in the same way that Hannah had been sold, with the proceeds returning to the estate. When Shinn died, in 1753, these provisions transpired. Plank, *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom*, 102; Woolman, 'Journal', 152.

⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 152.

⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 152 fn. 57.

⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 152.

⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 152.

¹⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 153.

As Woolman put it in this *Journal* entry, his goal was to be '*resigned*' to go to Barbados, a theme throughout this narrative.¹¹ By 1769, Woolman had been thinking about this journey for months. On February 6, 1769, he attained a traveling certificate from Burlington Monthly Meeting citing his 'exercise' to be 'resigned to go on a religious visit' to Barbados.¹² The following month, at the General Meeting of Ministers and Elders in Philadelphia, Woolman forwarded his request to the next level of the Quaker ecclesial structure. The minutes of the meeting originally indicated that an 'exercise attended his mind to visit' Barbados and then beneath the line between 'mind to' and 'visit' was added 'be resigned', so that it would read an 'exercise attended his mind to *be resigned* to visit' Barbados.¹³ Likewise, the Quarterly Meeting certificate stated that the 'exercise' concerned being 'resigned to a prospect' of visiting Barbados.¹⁴ In contrast, Woolman's contemporary, John Churchman's 1761 certificate cited only 'a concern to visit' Barbados.¹⁵ It is clear that Woolman emphasised 'resignation' over whether or not he actually went to Barbados.

As he prepared for the journey, Woolman asked his friend Israel Pemberton to inform him of a vessel heading from Philadelphia to Barbados, but, on April 4, 1769, Woolman wrote to Israel to say that he felt 'easy at this time without hearing on that subject' and implied that he was going through 'some difficulties'.¹⁶

On October 16, Woolman divulged to Israel that his 'exercise in regard to being

¹¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 153. Emphasis mine.

¹² 'Epistles to PYM Ministers and Elders', 1742-1784, Haverford College Library, Special Collections.

¹³ 'Epistles to PYM Ministers and Elders'. Emphasis mine.

¹⁴ 'Travelling Certificate for John Woolman to Barbados', 1769, Certificates for Ministers 1731-1844, Haverford College Library, Special Collections.

¹⁵ 'John Churchman's 1761 Certificate for travel to Barbados from PYM Meeting of Ministers and Elders', 1761, Certificates for Ministers 1731-1844, Haverford College Library, Special Collections.

¹⁶ John Woolman to Israel Pemberton, April 4, 1769, Pemberton Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

resigned to go' to Barbados 'continues', but that he was actively making provisions of bread to take on the voyage.¹⁷ He closed the letter by noting, 'I know nothing against going out pretty soon if way opens.'¹⁸

On October 22, Woolman wrote to a 'Beloved Friend' requesting information on boats in port that might take him to Barbados.¹⁹

On November 11, 1769, Woolman wrote to Israel that Israel's brother, James Pemberton, had a ship in port in Philadelphia that would be sailing for Barbados and Woolman '[knew] not but that I may look toward this vessel for a passage...'²⁰

In March, 1770, while ill and confined to his home, Woolman reflected, in his *Journal*, on the spiritual itinerary which his discernment about a journey to Barbados afforded.²¹ He wrote that he was 'exercised for the good of my fellow creatures in the West Indies' and 'grew jealous over myself lest the disagreeableness' of the journey would deter him from obedient action.²² In fact, he 'knew not that the Lord required me to go there, yet I believed that resignation was now called for in that respect, and feeling a danger of not being wholly devoted to him, I was frequently engaged to watch unto prayer that I might be preserved.'²³ Woolman articulated an internal conflict between compassion for people in the West Indies and the 'disagreeableness' of the journey.²⁴ At least part of his hesitancy was due to the contradiction of how to get to the West Indies

¹⁷ John Woolman to Israel Pemberton, October 16, 1769, Woolman Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

¹⁸ Woolman to Israel Pemberton, October 16, 1769.

¹⁹ John Woolman to "Beloved Friend", 10mo 1769, Haverford College Library, Special Collections.

²⁰ John Woolman to Israel Pemberton, November 11, 1769, Pemberton Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 155-158.

²² Woolman, 'Journal', 155.

²³ Woolman, 'Journal', 155.

²⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 155.

without condoning what he thought to be the sinfulness of the merchant trade, products and slave labour from which ships sailing to the West Indies benefited.²⁵ At the core of this internal conflict was whether or not Woolman believed himself to be in a state of 'resignation' to the divine revelation. To put it in Pryce's terminology, this conundrum was, for Woolman, a 'spiritual itinerary' of renouncing fear and uniting the 'true self' to an immediate 'presence' through the mode of 'quiet'.²⁶

About nine months after Woolman's original entry he continued his *Journal* reflection with the next step in his spiritual itinerary, as discerned through an inward awareness:

And upward of a year having passed, I walked one day in a solitary wood; my mind being covered with awfulness, cries were raised in me to my merciful Father that he would graciously keep me in faithfulness, and it then settled on my mind as a duty to open my condition to Friends at our Monthly Meeting, which I did soon after as follows: "An exercise hath attended me for some time past and of late been more weighty upon me, under which I believe it is required of me to be resigned to go on a visit to some part of the West Indies." And in the Quarterly and General Spring Meeting [I] found no clearness to express anything further than that I believed resignation herein was required of me. And having obtained certificates from all said meetings, I felt like a sojourner at my outward habitation, kept free from worldly encumbrance, and was often bowed in spirit before the Lord, with inward breathings to him that I might be rightly directed.²⁷

For those scholars who tend to view 18th century Quakers as world-escaping²⁸ (i.e 'kept free from worldly encumbrance'), self-annihilating²⁹ (i.e. 'I believed resignation... was

²⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 156-158; Michael Meranze, 'Materializing Conscience: Embodiment, Speech, and the Experience of Sympathetic Identification', *Early American Literature* 37, no. 1 (2002): 72.

²⁶ Pryce, 'Tradition of Quietism in Early Quakerism', 5.

²⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 155.

²⁸ Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity', 106-107; Jones, *Later Periods of Quakerism*, 59; Bauman, *For the Reputation of Truth*, 51-52.

²⁹ Jones, 'Quietism', 8.

required') and uncertain of their calling and place in salvation history³⁰ (i.e. '[I] found no clearness'), Woolman's reflection seems to confirm their interpretation. However, such a reading does not resonate with Woolman's larger theological convictions, his evangelistic efforts³¹ and social confrontations.³² Neither, in fact, does such a reading coincide with Woolman's belief that humanity could enact God's kingdom through a state of perfect consistency with the divine revelation.³³ To categorise Woolman thus ignores the fact that he acted in contradictory ways, sometimes affirming previous generalisations of Quietism and sometimes refuting them. What unites these complex and seemingly contradictory examples is Woolman's theogico-social vision of the government of Christ, which he believed was to intervene in world affairs.

Approaching Woolman from this apocalyptic perspective sheds new light on the convictions behind Woolman's quandary about sailing to Barbados. Indeed, Woolman was proactive in the specific steps he felt were consistent with the revelation of the divine will into the worldly sphere, such as seeking a certificate, preparing food for the journey and finding a ship.³⁴ These specific and practical steps were taken while the process of 'resignation' was ongoing. He identified this process of 'resignation' as a battle with the false-self, which was grounded in what he, elsewhere, called 'self-love'.³⁵ The full implication of God's revealed presence was realised in previously hidden parts of his 'mind'³⁶ and, thereby, expanded his theogico-social vision in the 'cause of universal righteousness'.³⁷ In a statement dated November 25, 1769, included in his

³⁰ Tousley, 'Experience of Regeneration', 37-39, 41.

³¹ See 3.2.2.

³² See chapter 3.

³³ See 4.2.

³⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 155-156.

³⁵ See 3.2.4.

³⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 156.

³⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 156-158.

Journal and shown to the owners of a ship bound for Barbados, Woolman identified the following 'trials', or key points, in his discernment:³⁸ 1) he expressed concern about indirect participation in the slave economy by sailing on a vessel transporting goods produced by slave labour;³⁹ and, 2) he was 'feeling an increasing concern to be wholly given up to the leadings of the Holy Spirit...[in] promoting righteousness on the earth.'⁴⁰

These key points illustrate Woolman's struggle to act faithfully amid the complicated inter-connections of the transatlantic marketplace. The mystical journey towards a state of 'resignation' occurred alongside awareness of the social and economic implications of sailing to Barbados. This 'resignation' was not a fatalism abdicating personal responsibility, but rather a desire to be true to the revelation of God, when the complexities of 18th century society seemed to head off faithful action on every front. 'Resignation' brought new ways of operating in the worldly sphere, which made it possible for Woolman to believe he acted out of the perfected-in-God-self consistent with God's kingdom, even as moral compromise appeared unavoidable no matter which path he followed under the influence of the false-self. Whether that meant not going to Barbados and so not ministering to people in need, or sailing to Barbados and indirectly participating in the slave economy, Woolman believed action undertaken outside of the divine revelation was subject to the fallenness and apostasy of the forces that rejected Christ's direct governance over human affairs. The conundrum of how to be so transformed as to know and obey the disclosure of supernatural revelation was resolved, in Woolman's opinion, by a mystical surrender to the direct teaching of the inward 'principle', which redeemed human activity '*resigned*' to God, no matter what that

³⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 156-158.

³⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 156.

⁴⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 156.

activity happened to be.

After he had talked to the ship owners, he decided 'my mind was resigned, but did not feel clearness to proceed.'⁴¹ Instead, he felt 'fresh confirmation' that God wanted him to return home and fulfill ministry duties with his neighbours.⁴² If scholars are to understand Woolman's theology correctly, it is essential to begin with the supernatural revelation which he believed framed the world of human affairs and societal organisation within transcendent and eternal purposes. In so doing, we can see the consistency of 'resignation' as a process for coming to know divine revelation. Through 'resignation', then, the true-self in God was liberated to act in ways that transcended the moral complexities of the 18th century transatlantic marketplace and so led to practical enactments of God's will.

Not surprisingly, Slaughter, who understands Quietism in negative terms,⁴³ views Woolman's decision not to sail to Barbados as a decision he later regretted,⁴⁴ despite Woolman's expressed sense of assurance that he had been consistent with divine revelation.⁴⁵ Other scholars have not identified the theological coherence with which Woolman approached this dilemma.⁴⁶ Meranze is correct in arguing that Woolman's debate about traveling to Barbados involves a struggle with the question 'how could one engage with this world without denying the world of spirit?'⁴⁷ Yet, in Woolman's mind, the resolution of this tension came in the terms of the quandary itself, notably through

⁴¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 158.

⁴² Woolman, 'Journal', 158-159.

⁴³ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 186.

⁴⁴ Slaughter, *Beautiful Soul*, 296.

⁴⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 158-159.

⁴⁶ Plank, 'Sailing with John Woolman', 73.

⁴⁷ Meranze continues: '[Woolman's] was not simply the enigma of how to be in the world but not of it, nor the quandary of the relationship between the inner and outer kingdoms. Instead, he confronted the riddle of whether he could do God's will and speak out against the powers of this world without that very effort making him a tool of sin.' Meranze, 'Materializing Conscience', 72.

attention to a state within God's will. As he said elsewhere, this state of faithfulness 'remove[d] all which lies between us and the safe foundation, and so direct[s] us in our outward employments' that God's revealed will would be done on earth.⁴⁸

While Dandelion rightly acknowledges the ethical reforms instigated by Woolman and his contemporaries, Woolman does not fit the quietist mold in terms of the increased 'distance' between God and humanity attributed to 18th century Quakers.⁴⁹ Woolman operated in a unique colonial context and developed his own temperament and way of interpreting world events. He held that, through immediate revelation, a transformed self could be attained. Woolman considered the state of being 'resigned' to God's will to be that of a new self in solidarity with the divine 'principle'. In this sense, it was just as important Woolman felt led in what *not* to do as it was in what *to* do. Within the state of consistency with God's will, revealed through immediate union with God's presence, Woolman's interpretation that one door of potential activity had closed, led to new avenues of faithful action not to withdrawal from activity altogether.⁵⁰ As Woolman described the events in his *Journal*, the 'resignation' that led him *not to sail* to Barbados, in 1769, was just as much part of life in obedience to the divine will as was the 'subjected' self-will which led to his decision *to sail* to England, in 1772.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 171.

⁴⁹ Dandelion, 'Guarded Domesticity', 97; see 1.2.4 d).

⁵⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 158-159.

⁵¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 158-159, 163.

APPENDIX B

PROTOLOGY: 'TRUE HARMONY RESTORED'

In 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', Woolman intertwines a realising eschatology with a belief in the protological restoration of humanity and society, or the restoration of God's original intentions for the created order.¹ The eschatological future, for Woolman, was a re-establishment of the protological past.² It entailed a restored immediacy between God and humanity which redefined relationships among individuals and with the created world.³ In this essay, the depravity of Babylon was connected to the tower of Babel.⁴ Both Babylon and Babel, according to Woolman's interpretation, were born out of 'self-exaltation' or the human usurpation of God's authority, most evident to Woolman in the rejection of a social order reflective of God's creative intentions.⁵ 'In departing from an humble trust in God', Woolman wrote, 'and following a selfish spirit, people have intentions to get the uper [sic] hand of their fellow-creatures, privately meditate on means to obtain their ends, and have a language in their hearts which is hard to understand. In Babel the language is confounded.'⁶ In Genesis 11, humans conspired to demonstrate their greatness by building a tower into

¹ Hill notes that eschatology is related to a doctrine of creation: 'Although eschatology is technically about the "end," most eschatologies are heavily dependent upon a doctrine of creation. The end will be as the beginning: the creation will return to its pre-fallen state when evil, sickness, and death did not exist (see Gen. 3).' Hill, *In God's Time*, 9.

² Woolman, 'Journal', 72-73; Gwyn has noted that the interplay between protology and eschatology was a feature of George Fox's theology. For an example of the way protological restoration informed the shape of the eschaton, see, Fox, *Journal*, 27; Gwyn, 'From Covenant to Contract', 133.

³ Woolman, 'Considerations on Keeping Negroes; Part Second', 223-224.

⁴ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444-445.

⁵ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444-445.

⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444-445.

heaven, but were thwarted when God confused their language and judged their pride.⁷ Likewise, Woolman argued that rejecting the God ordered and governed society was also a rejection of the divine voice.⁸ Those who followed that path replaced God with pride and frequently oppressed their fellow human beings, as well as the created world, in order to achieve economic advantage.⁹ In doing so, they entered a spiritual emptiness in which social relations were perplexed and God-human immediacy was 'confounded'.¹⁰

In 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', Woolman's vision of the inter-relatedness of the spiritual and temporal can be seen clearly. The historic moment was scrutinised and judged by the eternal Light; the ultimate purposes of God, Woolman claimed, were to be worked out in the world by the faithful.¹¹ Babel and Babylon signified a religious state in which humanity had veered away from the direct 'hear-and-obey', prelapsarian relationship.¹² In the exodus from Babylon, Woolman believed the protological harmony established by God in the creation event and lost at Babel would be restored in the 'returning of a pure language'.¹³ The language that had been 'confounded' in sin and pride would be restored to the true community of faith through divine visitation.¹⁴ Operating out of a state of protological harmony and eschatological

⁷ Genesis 11:7-9.

⁸ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444-445.

⁹ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 446-447; see also, Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 200-201.

¹⁰ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 444-445; see also, Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 200.

¹¹ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 445.

¹² Gwyn has demonstrated that early Friends were engaged in the restoration of every aspect of human affairs to the prelapsarian intimacy between God and humanity. That 'hear-and-obey' relationship known in the Garden of Eden, early Friends believed, was reestablished in their own day. Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word*, 200–201.

¹³ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 445.

¹⁴ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 445.

unfolding, the community of Christ, Woolman thought, was a harbinger of God's kingdom because the community could understand and speak God's 'language' for the world.¹⁵ In other words, he believed the direct, restored prelapsarian 'harmony' was present in his own actions.¹⁶

In his *Journal*, Woolman contended that the relationship between God and humanity was that of Creator to creation.¹⁷ That relationship presupposed, Woolman thought, an inevitable degree of divine concern over the treatment of the creation, especially human beings.¹⁸ The Creator-creation relationship was, for Woolman, an ethically energising component of his protology which entailed specific redemptive actions in the social realm, such as abstaining from the products of slave labour.¹⁹ In the restored pre-Babel intimacy between God and humanity, Woolman believed, all people related directly to God, and through God, to one another as kin.²⁰

Woolman's protology focused entirely on the restoration of the rightly ordered society he felt God intended in the act of creation²¹ and did not delve into the restoration

¹⁵ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 445.

¹⁶ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 445.

¹⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 157.

¹⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 157.

¹⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 157.

²⁰ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 198-200; Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 239-240; Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 445.

²¹ See, for example, the way Woolman desired labour practices to conform to 'the design of our Creator'. In contrast, John's brother, Abner, whose works John edited, talked about the restoration of the *imago dei* through faithfulness to God's creative intentions, which he interpreted specifically as vegetarianism. It is difficult to say to what extent Abner's writings reflect John's views, but, since vegetarianism does not appear in John's own writings, I conclude that, at least, it was not a central concern. Abner encourages colonists to consider how 'in the beginning the great Creator of the whole universe desired [that] man in a state of innocency should subsist on' healthy plants,

but alas, by giving way to selfish desires, how is he degenerated and alienated from his Maker and in this dark fallen state what vast havoc does he make with the Creation?

What numberless number of animals are oppressed and destroyed by man, and how often do men oppress and afflict each other? O my soul, think on the above hints, and in deep humility strive daily to experience a returning to your Maker and a living in the same innocency and uprightness which man in the beginning was created in.

There is a Spirit which, if men give way to, will humble and calm the mind, and make

of the *imago dei* in humanity, as Fox did a century earlier.²² For Woolman, absolute devotion to divine revelation could 'restore mankind to a state of true harmony' and, by dwelling under that leading, humanity would 'hold forth an invitation to others, to come forth from the entanglements of the spirit of this world.'²³ Thus, as he embodied God's creative intentions for societal organisation, he thought he actually restored the central purpose of God's creative intention.²⁴

While the universal protological restoration had not been *universally realised*, Woolman believed the conditions were met for its restoration: 'The state of mankind was harmonious in the beginning; and though sin hath introduced discord, yet through the wonderful love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, the way is open for our redemption, and means appointed to restore us to primitive harmony.'²⁵ In this view, sin was but a temporary interruption in God's plan,²⁶ but God had already met the conditions for sin's

man who is frail by nature, content with that which is only useful, and I believe if this Divine Gift is strictly attended to, it will appear and prevail more and more until the oppressed go free, and the voice of the oppressor shall no more be heard in the land.

Woolman, 'Abner Woolman's Essay on the West Indies Trade', 280; Woolman, 'Considerations on Keeping Negroes, Part Second', 223.

²² Fox had the religious experience of going through 'the flaming sword into the paradise of God' so that the whole 'creation gave another smell unto me than before, beyond what words can utter.' Fox felt himself re-established in a state of 'righteousness, being renewed up into the image of God by Christ Jesus, so that I say I was come up to the state of Adam which he was in before he fell.' Elsewhere, Fox wrote that the redemption of Christ brought humanity out of the state 'he is in in the fall and brings him up to the state man was in before he fell so Christ became a curse to bring man out of the curse...' Fox believed that in the presence of the Light, Quakers were reestablished in a state of perfection before the fall, which 'renews them up in the image of God, as man and woman were in before they fell; and makes man and woman's house as perfect again as God had made them at first.' The Fall that occurred in Eden also occurred in the hearts of all people, Fox believed, but, in Christ, Quakers were returned to the prelapsarian condition and were restored to the direct relationship of Adam and Eve to God. John Woolman, 'Considerations on Keeping Negroes, Part Second', 223; Fox, *Journal*, 27, 367-368; Fox, *Works*, vol. 7, 232-233; Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 440-441; Moore, *Light in Their Consciences*, 83; Richard Bailey, 'Was Seventeenth-Century Quaker Christology Homogeneous?' in *The Creation of Quaker Theory: Insider Perspectives*, ed. Pink. Dandelion (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 65; cf. Genesis 3:24: 'So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.' See also 5.1.

²³ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 440-441.

²⁴ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 440-441.

²⁵ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 208.

²⁶ See 3.2.4.

defeat and the prelapsarian state of 'harmony', which characterised the created order, was again available to the world.²⁷

The emphasis of his protology was not merely a sentimental image of the past, but a belief that God would create a new order within history that restored the original perfect state of creation.²⁸ Woolman's protology envisioned 1) the intimate hear-and-obey relationship between God and humanity restored in Christ's governance; and, 2) the restoration of God's original intentions for world affairs in which social, economic and political structures are transformed into a 'harmonious' state consistent with God's kingdom.²⁹ These two emphases in his protology are helpful in an examination of his eschatology because they highlight the this-worldly, perfect transformation that Woolman believed would ensue as God brought all things under God's governance.

²⁷ Woolman, 'Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes', 208.

²⁸ Max Stackhouse argues that this belief is typical of Christian eschatology:

While Christian eschatology often contains an element of the restoration of the innocence and capabilities that God gave to humanity in creation, both distorted by sin, the stronger emphasis is on the ultimate future. Christian eschatology thus invites a theology of history in which a new heaven, a new earth, and indeed a new city can be imagined and anticipated ethically.

Max Stackhouse, 'Ethics and Eschatology', in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry Walls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 553.

²⁹ Woolman, 'Considerations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 440–441.

APPENDIX C

'THE MINERAL IN THE FURNACE': THE PROCESS OF PURIFICATION

While Woolman believed that Christ's imputed perfection enabled the faithful to act consistently with the divine will at every moment, he also believed that, even after the initial moment of conversion and redemption from sin, the faithful continued to grow in purification.¹ Indeed, when considering the way colonists overlooked the suffering of slaves, he wrote 'that the more we are redeemed from selfishness, and brought into that love in which there is no respecter of persons, the more we are prepared to desire and labour for universal harmony among surfeiting wealth'.² Woolman here advocated for increasing degrees of growth, redemption and inclusion into God's love.³ While the earlier experience of redemption was efficacious, Woolman believed that his experience would expand over time, as the 'fresh instructions of Christ' continued 'from day to day'.⁴ The individual could be completely faithful to God's revelation at any given moment, however, the individual's consciousness of the divine revelation expanded over time and new horizons for faithfulness opened.

Thus, Woolman was convicted, in 1761, that God required him to wear clothes of 'the natural colour' and, at that point, faithfulness required obedience to that

¹ Barclay also believed in continual growth and progression towards perfection. He argued that, while perfection in this life was a possibility, it was a perfection that allowed for further growth and that he himself would not claim to have experienced. Woolman, though, did claim to be in a state of perfection, one that was initiated at conversion in the redemption from sin and continued to a this-worldly, fulfilled state in the government of Christ on earth; see 4.1.3, 4.2.4, 5.1.

² Woolman, 'Notes and commentaries on A. Benezet's A Caution and Warning to Great Britain', 96.

³ Woolman, 'Notes and commentaries on A. Benezet's A Caution and Warning to Great Britain', 96.

⁴ Woolman, 'Concerning the Ministry', 314.

revelation.⁵ Prior to that conviction in 1761, wearing undyed clothing was not required for obedience. There was, in his perfectionism, then, both the belief that God's revelation came 'day to day',⁶ and, so, was ongoing, but, also, that the expansion of one's understanding of divine revelation, led to growth in perfection. This process was built on an active submission to God's will and ongoing transformation into consistency with the will of God. Purification would be painful because it meant the renunciation of commonly accepted 'customs' of wealth accumulation, oppression and consumption, but would be made possible by God's initiative in the individual:⁷

Pure Wisdom leads People into Lowliness of Mind, in which they learn Resignation to the Divine Will, and Contentment in suffering for his Cause, when they cannot keep a clear Conscience without suffering. In this pure Wisdom the Mind is attentive to the Root and Original spring of Motions and Desires; and as we know "the Lord to be our Refuge," and find no Safety, but in humble walking before him, we feel an Holy Engagement, that every Desire which leads therefrom may be brought to Judgment.

While we proceed in this precious Way, and find ardent Longings for a full deliverance from every thing which defiles, all Prospects of Gain that are not consistent with the Wisdom from above, are considered as Snares, and an inward Concern is felt, that we may live under the Cross, and faithfully attend to that Holy Spirit which is sufficient to preserve out of them.⁸

'Pure Wisdom' had dual functions: it was God's revelation that taught people to obey God's will,⁹ while, at the same time, was a state of perfection within the divine will in which the faithful dwelled.¹⁰ In a state of consistency with 'Pure Wisdom', human beings were taught to long 'for a full deliverance' from sin and to 'live under the Cross'.¹¹

Obedience to the divine revelation and the suffering and sacrifice it sometimes entailed,

⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 120.

⁶ Woolman, 'Concerning the Ministry', 314.

⁷ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 385.

⁸ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 385.

⁹ See this aspect explained in 2.2.

¹⁰ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 385.

¹¹ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 385.

Woolman believed, had a refining and purifying effect and was able 'to preserve out' of the 'Snares' of the 18th century world.¹² In conjunction with the guidance of 'Pure Wisdom', the faithful person would be guided in the use of 'buildings, Furniture, Food and Raiment' in a way that was consistent with God's purposes.¹³ As one continued in this state under the divine revelation, 'the Way gradually opens to cease from that Spirit which craves Riches and Things fetched far...and so intrudes upon the true Harmony of life.'¹⁴ This 'gradual'¹⁵ process of complete obedience to God's revelation, for Woolman, was very practical because it would direct human beings in their everyday decisions and choices and be a witness to the rest of the world:

The Love of Christ, which preserves the faithful in purity of heart, puts men into a motion which works harmoniously, and in which their example yields clear and safe instruction: thus our Redeemer said, Ye are the light of the world.

This is the standard which God hath commanded to be lifted to the people, and the possibility of this standard being now lifted up by us, standeth in that of a lowly watchful attention to the leadings of Him who is the light of life...¹⁶

Christ's perfecting influence 'preserves' from sin in the midst of a fallen world, but also 'puts men into a motion' which enacts God's reign in human affairs through the lives of the faithful.¹⁷ The process of purification refined both the spirit and the behaviours of the recipients of divine revelation, 'that to labour for a perfect redemption from this spirit of oppression is the great business of the whole family of Christ Jesus in this world.'¹⁸

¹² Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 385.

¹³ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 393.

¹⁴ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 393.

¹⁵ Woolman, 'Considerations on Pure Wisdom', 393.

¹⁶ Woolman, 'Conversations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 472.

¹⁷ Woolman, 'Conversations on the True Harmony of Mankind', 472.

¹⁸ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 262.

Woolman did not believe that he comprehended the whole of the divine revelation at the moment of conversion, even though conversion was crucial and transformative and enabled a new relationship with God than that which had previously been known, including redemption from sin.¹⁹ Rather, he believed God's presence would continue to sanctify him.²⁰ However, just as he did not believe himself to be immediately and completely brought into a spiritually complete state at the moment of conversion, he also did not believe that the redemption from sin experienced at conversion was only a foretaste of a grander sanctification to be received later in life. In 1757, he used the metaphor of the refinement of a mineral to describe the process of purification which resulted in a transformed substance:

This work of subjecting the will is compared to the mineral in the furnace which through fervent heat is reduced from its first principle. He refine [sic] them as silver is refined; "he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver" [Mal. 3:3]. By these comparisons we are instructed in the necessity of the melting operation of the hand of God upon us to prepare our hearts truly to adore him and manifest that adoration by inwardly turning away from that spirit, in all its workings, which is not of him.²¹

He argued that purification was necessary so that anything not of God would be refined. The result of this purification, then, would be a substance without any dross, capable of perfect worship and obedience.²² Woolman did not hold up the process of purification as an end in itself. Rather purification was the means to the new, transformed substance it would produce.²³

¹⁹ See 2.2.1.

²⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 56.

²¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 56.

²² Woolman, 'Journal', 56.

²³ This purification process is similar to Boehme's alchemical analogy, with which Woolman was familiar. For Boehme, the love of Christ, which forgives the sinner, was the external substance which could then transform them into spiritually reborn children of God, in a process of spiritual transmutation. 'The resulting spiritual rebirth', Birkel and Jeff Bach summarise, 'removes the coarse, damaging effects of sin, and renders the sinner a precious child of God. Christ's love is like the

In 1772, Woolman described this process of purification and the transformation it engendered in a passage dense with biblical imagery.²⁴ The complexity of his reflections suggests that Woolman's theology of perfection itself was complex and ambiguous.²⁵ He asked the question: 'Where shall a pious father place his son apprentice to be instructed in the practice of crossing the seas, and have faith to believe that Christ our holy Shepherd leads him to place his son there?'²⁶ To put it another way, was it possible for parents to teach their children a trade which participated in a sinful system, while still being faithful to God's leading? Woolman's reflection focused on 'the waters of separation' and interwove allusions to Moses, Esau, Hebrew cultic rites, the Prophets, and, ultimately, a new creation.²⁷

Woolman argued that 'in an entire subjection of our wills' God 'opens a way' for the faithful to have all of their wants 'bounded by his wisdom; and here we experience the substance of what Moses *the prophet* figured out in the water of separation as a purification from sin.'²⁸ In the manuscript of his Sea Journal, he added:

The earthly mind, in which men receive honour one of another, leads into entangling mixtures; but in this water of separation cleanseth the soul from the love of money, and bring to a humble contentment even in a low estate, where we learn to trust in God that he in his own way will provide for us that which he knows to be best.²⁹

In 'the water of separation', the mind subjected to God was cleansed from sin and disentangled from the sinful practices of the transatlantic marketplace or other systemic

transforming substance applied to base materials in order to generate precious metals.' Birkel and Bach, 'Introduction,' 18. See also 5.1.

²⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 175-176.

²⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 175.

²⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 175.

²⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 175-177.

²⁸ Woolman, 'Journal', 175.

²⁹ Woolman, 'MS T2, Manuscript of John Woolman's Sea Journal.'

evils.³⁰ Despite how inextricable from these larger socio-economic forces the colonist's life seemed, Woolman believed that God revealed the way to navigate these forces without participating in them.³¹

The possibility of perfection becomes real through the process of purification. Woolman identified Esau, 'a child red all over', as a representation of 'the natural will of man'.³² Then, Woolman connected Esau's red hair with Hebrew purification rites, which called for the sacrifice of a 'red heifer without blemish', as prescribed in Numbers 19:2.³³ Woolman noted that 'all pertaining to' the red heifer 'was to be burnt without the camp...'³⁴ However, Woolman then switched the analogy from purification to crucifixion, and read into the sacrifice of the 'red heifer' in Hebrew purification rites, the crucifixion of the 'natural will', which had earlier been represented by Esau:³⁵ 'Thus the crucifying of the old man, or natural will, is represented, and hence comes a separation from that carnal mind which is death. "He who toucheth the dead body of a man and purifieth not himself with the water of separation, he defileth the tabernacle of the Lord; he is unclean." Numbers 19:13.'³⁶

By going through the 'water of separation', the old self was crucified and a new, redeemed self emerged. Woolman restated this purification in the language of Isaiah, stating that, if a person was motivated by greed to enter a 'business wherein they dwell amongst the tombs...and touch the bodies of those who are dead', they are in guilt and

³⁰ Woolman, 'MS T2, Manuscript of John Woolman's Sea Journal.'

³¹ Woolman, 'MS T2, Manuscript of John Woolman's Sea Journal.'

³² Woolman, 'Journal', 175.

³³ Woolman, 'Journal', 175.

³⁴ Woolman, 'Journal', 176.

³⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 176.

³⁶ Woolman, 'Journal', 176.

corruption.³⁷ His reference to 'tombs' and 'bodies' was probably an allusion to Isaiah 65, which condemned an apostate people who defiled themselves by remaining 'among the graves, and [lodging] in the monuments' and so rejected God's covenant.³⁸ However, in this chapter of Isaiah, God's determination to be compassionate to God's people led to a new, restored covenant with the people.³⁹ Likewise, Woolman said, that, even those who had gone into business out of sinful motives and become contaminated with worldly corruptions, could be transformed:

if these through the infinite love of God feel the power of the cross of Christ to crucify them to the world, and therein learn humbly to follow the divine leader, here is the judgment of this world – here the prince of this world is cast out. The water of separation is felt; and though we have been amongst the slain and through the desire of gain have touched the dead body of a man, yet in the purifying love of Christ we are washed in the water of separation, are brought off from that business, from that gain, and from that fellowship which was not agreeable to his holy will. And I have felt a renewed confirmation in the time of this his voyage that the Lord in infinite love is calling to his visited children to so give up all outward possessions and means of getting treasures that his Holy Spirit may have free course in their hearts and direct them in all their proceedings. To feel the substance pointed at in this figure, man must know death as to his own will.⁴⁰

This process of purification was also eschatological because, through self-crucifixion in this life, 'the judgment of this world' and the banishment of the devil would be experienced.⁴¹ Consistent with his amillennialism, the final judgment occurred in the course of the lives of the faithful, as God's power gained the upper hand in a person's life and they were resurrected with Christ inwardly.⁴² Instead of one judgment set in a

³⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 176.

³⁸ Isaiah 65:2.

³⁹ Isaiah 65.

⁴⁰ Woolman, 'Journal', 176.

⁴¹ Woolman, 'Journal', 176.

⁴² For more on Woolman's view of judgment see 4.3. The most common way Woolman viewed God's judgment was in the form of events he called 'chastisements', which revealed God's displeasure with humanity. These were supernatural invasions into the natural world through natural forces.

future time, Woolman believed that, in the crucifixion of the self and the transformation to a new state of perfection, the eschatological judgment occurred and the individual entered into the 'kingdom of God'.⁴³ In submission to Christ and his power, the effect of 'the water of separation is felt' and the individual becomes clean, as, also, the Hebrews were cleansed in the sacrifice of the 'red heifer' and purified from sin.⁴⁴ In that purified state, colonists could no longer participate in the world in a sinful way. They would be so transformed in God's will that it would be impossible to dwell in the contamination of greed and sinful commercial practices.⁴⁵ Thus, Woolman's answer to his own hypothetical question was that, while it was impossible to be faithful and still educate a child in corrosive employments, God would make a way for the faithful to act perfectly. Indeed, Woolman proclaimed that parents must not compromise their religious convictions in order to provide material advancement for their children because 'to do evil that good may come of it is contrary to the doctrine of Christianity' and so God would lead the way, if colonists listened for God's instruction.⁴⁶

The death of the fallen 'natural will of man' in the 'waters of separation'⁴⁷ resulted in the new state in which 'all things are new and all things are of God'.⁴⁸ A perfected life came through the death of one's own will under the immediate direction of God's Spirit. The result of purification, then, was transformation into a perfected state in God's kingdom on earth.⁴⁹ The process of purification was a realisable goal for this life which was inextricably related to entering the eschaton itself.

⁴³ Woolman, 'Journal', 176; see 4.1.1.

⁴⁴ Numbers 19.

⁴⁵ Woolman, 'Journal', 176.

⁴⁶ Woolman, 'Plea for the Poor', 266.

⁴⁷ Woolman, 'Journal', 175.

⁴⁸ See 4.1.3.

⁴⁹ Woolman, 'Journal', 176.

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